

Silvermoon

by Immora

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Summary: The Senshi are reborn into a new Silver Millennium after the earth is destroyed.

1. Resurrection

~~SILVERMOON~~

> Resurrection
 Prologue through Three

> a Bishoujo Senshi Sailormoon fanfiction by Immora

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>I apologize for the awful line-wrapping.

>Author's Notes:

>Rating: PG-13 because younger kids might not be able to handle it.
The story contains mild language, some violence, homosexuality,

>and suggestive commentary. If you can't handle that kind of content,
don't read this story.

>
The first part of the story is set about four years after Sailor Stars,

>if you care.

>The characters in this story are from the manga and anime Bishoujo
Senshi Sailormoon, owned by Naoko Takeuchi, Toei Animation, Kodansha,

>and probably more companies whose names I don't know. This story itself
is mine, but was based upon situations appearing in the manga and anime,

>the original versions, not the dub.

>This story was editted from my previously released version of it because
of several errors and some huge plot mistakes I wanted to correct.

>Some parts of this document might look better with word wrap if you
have a smaller monitor. I decided to make notes within the document

>as to where a new section of the story began so it would be

easier
to read. I have not actually editted the story from the previous post. This story is _not_ completed yet. I will finish it one day.
>I have taken some elements from the manga for my story, but please note
that I paired some of the Inner Senshi with a different Shitennō than in the manga; at the time I wrote it like that, I knew they were paired with *someone*, and I just picked the Shitennō I thought were the ones they had been paired with. I was wrong ^^;;;
>Also, the Shitennō are called "generals" in the story because 1) when I
first started writing, I didn't know they were ever called anything else, 2) hey, they're supposed to be Earth generals; they're Shitennō when Beryl
corrupts them. Yeah, that's it ^^;;;
>I'm well aware that there are plenty of mistakes throughout, but really, I've already done one huge edit to it, I don't want to go through and
change it again. If you want to point them out, go right ahead, but I most likely know about them already :) I don't consider this anywhere
near my finest work; I keep it available only because I put so much time into it and a lot of people have expressed their love for it.

>Don't copyplagiarize my story. If you wanna base a story on it, TOO BAD!

>Come up with your own idea. Be original. You shouldn't bother writing a
fanfic if you can't think of your own plot! Sailor Moon's new form

>[Silver Moon] was thought up by yours truly, so you may not use it in
your own fanfic. I know there's been other Silver Moon's popping up

>around the 'net, but hey, I created her five years ago!
As for my characters, places, and races:

>All are copyrighted by myself and no one else, all rights reserved
Sharra is copyrighted 1994-2001

>Immora and Necros are copyrighted 1995-2001
Nagera, Lorenada, Curse/Cassandra, and Dageena 1996-2001

>Ka'ina and Akeru are copyrighted 1997-2001
E'melok is copyrighted 1998-2001

>Quenhol, Quenholtian, the Dragana, and the Katrisa are copyrighted
1997-2001

>Elves obviously aren't an original concept, so I don't claim them.
If you couldn't figure it out, the Immora that appears in this story is my _character_... not ME. My name is definitely not Immora, my alias came from my character [not vice versa] which I created for a novel (which I keep telling myself I'll finish) before I even knew
what the Internet was. She isn't meant to be a self-insertion or an author's avatar.

>You can e-mail me at raziel@angelsanctuary.org
Visit my website at <http://raziel.angelsanctuary.org> or
<http://come.to/immora>

>
That's about it for now. Enjoy my fic!

>

>

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> _____

>
 PROLOGUE
>

>

>
Time: Midday, The Last Day of the Original Time
>Place: Tokyo, Japan

>
It had been a long, tiring day at school for all the Senshi.
Several
>of them had been given long exams, while the others had spent
time
preparing for a school play. After school, while relaxing in
the park,
>the unexpected happened.

>Hotaru was the first to realize something seriously wrong was going
to
happen, several of the others also getting bad feelings about
this day.
>
They were completely unprepared when Mistress Nine appeared.

>
She stood tall above them, in her long navy and white dress with
her
>flowing black hair. The Senshi didn't think to question why she was

standing there, they just transformed immediately to fight.

>
After an hour of fighting, Sailor Saturn was lying unconscious
on the
>ground as the other Senshi tried to protect her. Mistress Nine
laughed
as blasts of black energy shocked the other Senshi as she
moved forward
>to possess Saturn again.

>Mistress Nine wanted Saturn's power, not only to Silence the Earth,
but
the rest of the galaxy as well, leaving her to rule over it.
The Senshi
>couldn't let this happen and had rose to the challenge. Pluto,
however,
was against it, claiming it an event not supposed to
happen and that they
>shouldn't try anything or risk destroying their timeline. The other
Senshi
ignored her. Mistress Nine, for some reason, couldn't
possess Saturn while
>she was unconscious, so they had to defeat her before Saturn woke
up.

>"You realize that you cannot hope to beat me," Mistress Nine
cackled. "You
can't stop me from possessing Hotaru again; nothing
can!"
>
The Senshi were taking blows left and right, barely any hits
landing on
>Mistress Nine. "Try to combine attacks!" Chibi-Moon shouted to the
other
Inner Senshi. The girl, now about fifteen, was standing at
the fallen
>Saturn's side, trying to protect her.

>Venus shouted, "Love and Beauty Shock!" but her attack missed, and
Mars
barely managed to shove her out of the way as Mistress Nine
repelled the
>attack.

>In an effort made nearly useless by her broken arm, Uranus shouted,
"WORLD...
SHAKING!" Then she tossed a ball of yellow energy at
Mistress Nine's
>feet. It caused the evil woman to be thrown back, but she
quickly
recovered and sent a rain of blasts at Uranus.

>
Neptune dove and knocked Uranus over, getting her away from the

blasts.

>Though in the process she received several injuries, she stood and
shouted, "DEEP... SUBMERGE!" A wave of water rushed at
Mistress Nine,
>who sidestepped with an evil grin on her face.

>"Tsk, tsk, I thought the Senshi would do better!" She sent bursts
of
energy towards the Inner Senshi, who tried to counter the
attack with
>their own.

>"SUPREME THUNDER!"

>"Crescent... Beam... SHOWER!"

>"BURNING MANDALA!"

>"Shining Aqua Illusion!"

>The attack didn't work. Mistress Nine just absorbed the energy,
negated
it, and tossed it back at them. The Inner Senshi fell with
screams of pain as
>the energy was soaked in by their bodies. They whimpered and
shuddered,
falling to the ground.
>
Sailor Moon dashed over to them, and sunk to her knees as she
realized they
>were dead. "No..." she whispered, "They can't be dead..." She sobbed
softly.

>"Sailor Moon," Pluto warned, "Mistress Nine is preparing to attack
you..."

>Sailor Moon bit her lip and shouted, "MOON ETERNAL POWER...
MAKE-UP!"
She transformed into Eternal Sailor Moon. She rushed
forward with her Eternal
>Tier and shouted, "STARLIGHT HONEYMOON THERAPY KISS!"

>The attack bounced off a shield around Mistress Nine, became a
negative
attack, and rushed back at Sailor Moon. "No!" Moon
screamed as the
>energy pulsed through her. She slumped to the ground, tears in her
eyes,
as she died.
>
"MAMA!" Chibi-Moon cried, running to her. "Oh please no, don't
leave me!!
>I-I can't lose you!"

>The Outer Senshi (left standing alone with Chibi-Moon) stared in
shock.
Saturn groaned slightly, but remained unconscious.

>
"MAMA!" Chibi-Moon shouted. She fell to her knees.

>
Neptune put a comforting hand on her shoulder. "She... she'll be
okay...
>at least..." she gulped, "as least she didn't have to suffer.

>Chibi-Moon whimpered. "But how can we hope to stop Mistress Nine
now?"

>Her only answer was silence as Neptune stood up tall and held out
her
Aqua Mirror. "Aqua Mirror... show me," she whispered, "what
will happen
>to us..." She gasped, but wouldn't say what it revealed.

>"What is it?" Uranus asked.

>Neptune didn't answer. "Submarine... DEFLECTOR!" she shouted,
holding
out her mirror as blasts of light charged for Mistress
Nine. Mistress
>Nine gathered the attack into her hands and changed it around to
dark
energy, and sent it rushing at Neptune. Neptune could only
stare in
>horror as it rushed through her veins, causing her to scream

loudly.
She fell to the ground as Uranus looked on with a shocked face.

>
"Michiru ..." was all the tall blond whispered. She gripped the Space

>Sword in her trembling hand as she raised her eyes to Mistress Nine.
Shaking slightly, she leapt at the demoness, slashing wildly with the

>sword. Mistress Nine sidestepped several swings, a bit surprised when
the blade hit her arm slightly. Uranus yelled incoherently as she

>swung again and again.

>"Pluto, we have to help her!" Chibi-Moon urged.

>"It's her fight," Pluto whispered. "There's nothing we can do to help."

>Uranus cut a large gash in Mistress Nine's arm before the woman finally
reached her hand out and grabbed the Senshi by the neck. Uranus gasped

>slightly as Mistress Nine drained her energy and threw her body aside.

>Chibi-Moon started shaking. "Everyone... but me, and you, and Saturn...
dead..."

>
"Stand back," Pluto ordered.

>
"But--"

>
"Do it."

>
Chibi-Moon nodded meekly and backed away as Pluto gripped her Time Staff in

>hand and prepared to attack. "Be careful," she whispered, as Pluto slowly
walked forward.

>
Raising her Time Staff, she grimly pressed her lips together and tightened

>her grip on the staff. Raising it, she whispered, "Dead Scream!" Expecting the
attack to be countered, she quickly whirled her staff in a circle as

>Mistress Nine deflected it, but this motion caused the attack to fly
back at Mistress Nine again. Mistress Nine did not expect this and was

>momentarily incapacitated.

>Pluto was ready to send out another attack when Mistress Nine sent a
rain of blasts around Pluto in a circle around her feet. Pluto quickly

>leapt up into the air, flipped, and swung her staff out, landing a blow
to Mistress Nine's chin. Her head snapped back and she fell to the ground.

>Pluto did not revel in her momentary victory, she knew that Mistress
Nine would soon recover. However, she was incredibly surprised to hear

>Saturn's weak voice shout out, "Setsuna-san!" Pluto whipped around as
Saturn continued, "Please... just go! Or I swear I will cut you down

>where you stand!"

>Saturn's hand found her Silence Glaive, and she stood up shakily,
holding it. She pointed it an inch from Pluto's neck.

"Go, now, or I

>will kill you." A look of cold determination hardened her face.

>Pluto stared into those cold purple eyes for a moment, her blood
chilled. "Saturn, Hotaru, you must step aside..."

>
Saturn grimly set her jaw, and swung her glaive to the side, as if to

>whirl it around again to cut Pluto's head off. Pluto took a step back.
"Saturn, please!" she pleaded.

>
Saturn moved quickly for someone of such small size, and was behind

>Pluto with the blade of her glaive pointed at her throat before the
taller woman knew what Saturn was doing. In a cold, expressionless

>voice, Saturn said quietly, "Leave and take Chibi-Usa with you or I will be
the one to kill you."

>
Saturn pressed the blade closer, emphasizing her point. Pluto swallowed

>hard. "Fine then. Let me go and we will leave."
>Saturn frowned, but removed the glaive and pushed Pluto forward. Pluto
narrowed her eyes and a wave of purple light enveloped her and Chibi-Moon.

>Saturn turned to face Mistress Nine, assuming they had left.

>Pluto was, in reality, hiding them from other people in the time stream, so
they could observe without anyone knowing they were there. I hate lying like this,
she thought to herself, but I have to do this.
>Mistress Nine picked herself off the ground and laughed. "All alone now,

Hotaru! Your planet is doomed!"
>
Saturn glanced at the bodies around her. "No..." an idea dawning on her.

>"We aren't." It was risky, but she forced herself to believe, There's
no other way, these people will die anyway... She drew a shuddered

>breath and raised her glaive. "DEATH... REBORN..."
>"No, WAIT!" Mistress Nine cried, leaping at Saturn, her fingernails
turned to long, deadly claws.

>
"REVOLUTION!!!" Saturn fought for purchase with her feet as enormous

>winds poured from her glaive. She had to hold onto it or she'd be sucked
away too. It seemed she would be the only one left, until Mistress Nine

>knocked it out of her hands. A purple tinged white glow emanated, slowly
soaking everything in its wake into its depths.

>
"YOU FOOL!" Mistress Nine screamed, first to be pulled in.

>
Saturn watched the effects of her most destructive power soak in

>everything, tears running from her purple eyes. "This is why I sent you
away, Setsuna," she thought to herself during her last moments before

>the glow took her too. "So you would go on to tell our future selves
what happened to us..."

>
Saturn sighed as she was enveloped by a light that killed her and spread

>to destroy everything else resting on the surface of Earth.

>

>Pluto and Chibi-Moon stood side by side, the only two beings left on the
Silenced Earth. "Why didn't we die?" Chibi-Moon said in a choked voice

>as she looked out at the bodies of all the Senshi lying there.

>"We were protected from the flow of time," Pluto whispered. Tears gathered
in her eyes but she forced herself not to cry. "You have to go to the future,

>quickly, before time catches up and destroys Crystal Tokyo too."

>"I will," Chibi-Moon said, gripping the key Pluto had given her long ago and
saying the phrase that shortly took her to the future.

>
Pluto opened the doors to the Gate of Time and returned to her post. She looked

>out over the world as the attack completed itself. The Earth was enveloped in
fire and disappeared.

>
"And so it ends," Pluto whispered as tears flowed down her dark cheeks. "And so

>it begins again."

>

> _____

>
 ONE

>

>

>
Time: When Chibi-Usa returns to Crystal Tokyo

>Place: the Royal Palace in Crystal Tokyo

>

>Chibi-Usa frantically ran through the halls of the palace, searching for
someone... anyone... to warn. She ran for a long time before she bumped

>into Senshi Neptune. "N-Neptune! *gasp* My mother, where is she?!"

>Senshi Neptune sighed. "Very busy, as am I! I need to get something for
her. Do you really need to speak with her?"

>
"It's urgent! VERY urgent!"

>
Senshi Neptune sighed and took Chibi-Usa's hand and ran through the hall

>with her, to a room several people were in... King Endymion, Senshi
Venus, Senshi Mars, Senshi Jupiter, Senshi Uranus, Senshi Saturn,

>Pluto-sensei, and Neo-Queen Serenity. They seemed tired, and very busy,
as Senshi Neptune had said.

>
"Mama!" Chibi-Usa practically screamed.

>
All turned to look at her. Uranus snorted. "We are in the middle of a

>very important meeting, Princess."

>Chibi-Usa gulped. "Well... where I was, there was a battle, a fight. We
were all dying! And, and Pluto told me to go, so I came to warn you..."

>
"We know," Senshi Mars said. "I had a premonition about it, and so did

>Saturn. We are trying to decide what to do."

>Senshi Saturn said softly. "Not long before it happens."

>Chibi-Usa's eyes widened. "Before it happens here too?!"

>Senshi Mercury entered the room and sat down by Senshi Jupiter, and the
Neptune took a seat next to Uranus. King Endymion squeezed Neo-Queen

>Serenity's hand. "Well, daughter," she said, "she's right. Pluto came here
and told us that it would happen, confirming what Mars and Saturn already

>predicted. There's no way to avoid it. We don't know why the past Saturn
did it though. Have any ideas, Pluto?"

>
Pluto sighed and tried to explain. "By doing that, the world would start

>over. Certain people, like myself, who resided in a separate

dimension
would survive it, however... the rest wouldn't." She grasped her staff

>and continued, "Your essences... your spirits... will be reborn later
in the new world, but it will take awhile for the Silver Millennium to

>come around again. I am afraid the only one of you I can save is
Chibi-Usa. The rest of you, I will see you in several tens of millions

>of years."

>Pluto paused, and caused a hologram to form. It was of the entire solar
system, mainly the planets. "This will show you what happened to

>everything,"

>Suddenly the holographic Earth glowed white and exploded. A huge ring of
purple tinged light raced out, destroying all the planets it touched,

>the sun, moons, and asteroids along with it. Everyone but Pluto gasped
in horror. "Apparently, Saturn did not realize her own power, and

>destroyed our entire system. I will leave you with this image..." she
gestured to the black hologram, "and, several minutes to say good-byes."

>
Pluto grabbed Chibi-Usa's hand and stood up.

>
"Hang on a second!" Venus shouted, and everyone stood up with her. "Why

>can't you save us?!"

>Pluto sighed and closed her dark red eyes. "One, you are guaranteed to
be reborn, so if I were to save you here, two of you will exist in the

>new time. That would be a paradox and is not permitted. Second, Chibi-Usa
is not guaranteed to come back, so I need to make sure she does."

>
"It's still stupid," Uranus muttered dryly under her breath. "I mean,

>she's just a girl... we've been around awhile now. And I am sure that
Serenity and Endymion will, ah, end up having her." The other older

>Senshi chuckled a bit while Serenity and Endymion blushed.

>Neptune slapped Uranus' arm lightly. "Pluto knows what she is doing,"
she said. "If we are not allowed to be 'saved,' then we cannot be

>saved."

>"I still don't think..."

>Neptune laughed lightly at Uranus. "Haruka," she said softly, using
Senshi Uranus' former name. "Setsuna knows what she's doing! Let her do

>her job, she'll take care of everything." She reached out and gave
Uranus' hand a reassuring squeeze.

>
Mercury said, "Well, how did we die back then anyway?"

>
Saturn was quiet. "I... was unconscious most of the time."

>
Pluto-sensei tapped her foot. "I'll make this quick... Mistress Nine

>blasted all the Inner Senshi after they attack. "Moon used her Starlight
Honeymoon Therapy Kiss, but Mistress Nine deflected it in its negative form,

>causing Moon to die. Neptune used her Submarine Deflector, and again Mistress
Nine turned it into negative energy and deflected it.

Uranus went ballistic

>and wildly attack her, but Mistress Nine drained all her energy.
Saturn
was killed when she used her Death Reborn Revolution and
Mistress Nine

>knocked her glaive away. If Saturn had been able to hold onto it
she
would have probably lived."

>
Pluto stood up. "I'm really sorry, but we're almost out of time.
We have

>to leave _now_ if we are going to return to the Gate of Time.

>Pluto unexpectedly grabbed Chibi-Usa's hand and shouted, "Dark
Dome
Open!" She pulled the girl in with her, and the portal closed
behind

>her. While the others stared in shock at her sudden departure.

>"I can't believe she just left like that!" Uranus snarled, pounding
the
table. "No 'good-bye' or 'I'll make sure you're reborn' or
anything!"

>
Senshi Mars shrugged. "She is the Guardian of Time. She is under
a lot

>of pressure. Still, she could have said SOMETHING else before she
left."

>The Senshi and what remained of the Royal Family sat in silence.

>"How long now?" Jupiter asked.

>"Three minutes," Saturn answered, curled up in a ball in her
chair.

>The King and Queen said, "Good-bye" to everyone and walked out to
spend
their last minutes alone. Neptune gave Uranus a sad look,
and they both

>said "bye" and walked away, holding hands.

>The other Senshi sat alone and in silence, then Mars left to say a
prayer.
Jupiter watched the sky, while Mercury stared at her
hands. Venus was sitting

>with wide eyes, unmoving. Saturn whispering quiet words to herself,
trying
to convince herself what she had done was right.

>
Serenity sat with Endymion quietly, before she whispered, "I
love you." He

>put his arm around her, and she leaned her head on his shoulder,
tears streaming
down her cheeks. "I love you."

>
He gave her a gentle kiss as the glow passed over them.

>
The Original Time on Earth ended.

>

>
Time: unknown

>Place: The Gateway of Time

>

>Chibi-Usa sat off to the side, wearing pale pink robes and a silver
rope
belt around her waist. Pluto stood in front of the Gateway,
watching for

>the flash that would indicate the end had come.

>"You do know you are immortal now, Chibi-Usa. Since we are outside
of
time, you will not age but slightly."

>
"I don't care," Chibi-Usa muttered. "You LET my mother and
father die

>there! And my best friend! And all the other Senshi! How could you
DO
that?!"

>
Pluto was silent for a moment. "Chibi-Usa, the world will start
over..."

>the dinosaurs, the first continents, the Silver Millennium. It will take
awhile, but as soon as the latter arrives, they will be reborn."

>
Chibi-Usa made a "hmpf!" Wiping away a tear, she shouted, "YOU DON'T

>CARE, DO YOU?!"

>Pluto whirled around, trying to remain calm. "OF COURSE I care! Your
parents were my King and Queen! The Outer Senshi were my best... my

>ONLY real friends! All the other Senshi were also important to me too! But I
couldn't take them because that would effect time even worse than it

>already has been effected! Don't YOU care about my feelings too? It was
very hard for me to just let them go, but you are being a selfish

>little... a-a... "

>Pluto leaned over against a wall and started crying.

>Chibi-Usa stared in shock. She had NEVER seen Pluto cry. "Puu?" she
whispered. "Oh God, I'm sorry." She hugged Luna-P and cried too as

>the bright white flash came.

>

>Time: during the new Jurassic Era
Place: same as previous

>

>
Chibi-Usa pressed her hands against a mirror that allowed people inside

>the Gate of Time to look outside and stared out at the dinosaurs. "Wow,
look at them!" she exclaimed.

>
Chibi-Usa was an adult now, appearing to be about twenty. Pluto had been

>surprised when the teen had aged this much in such a short (at least to
her) amount of time, but she said that she was sure that Chibi-Usa

>wouldn't age anymore. Chibi-Usa now insisted on being called her real
name, Usagi. She walked away from the window to brush her long pink

>hair, which reached to her knees now, that she didn't wear in her
odangos anymore. She saw Pluto sitting in the corner, flipping through a

>photo album, a gentle smile on her face.

>"Those are the Senshi..." Usagi whispered... "I miss them so much still.
Especially Mama..."

>
Usagi walked off to play with Luna-P, and Pluto returned to looking through

>her book.

>

>Time: Millions of years later
Place: same as previous

>

>
Pluto was woken up from a long rest to see Usagi there, shaking her to wake her

>up. "Pluto! Pluto!"

>Pluto closed her eyes tight and moaned slightly. "I was sleeping... what is it?"

>"You said there would be a big flash of white light when the Silver Millennium
starts?"

>
"Yes, why?"

>
"Welllll.... come see."

>
Pluto stood up and ran to the mirror and saw... "My God! It HAS started!"

>

> _____

>
 TWO
>

>

>
Time: the new Silver Millennium
>Place: Princess Serenity's room, the Palace, the Moon Kingdom

>

>Princess Serenity sat alone in her room, struggling with her long white
dress. "It just... doesn't... fit right!" she shouted to herself.
>
Her mother walked in, an imposing woman wearing a simple yet elegant white dress. "Daughter," Queen Serenity said in her soft voice, "maybe
you just need a new dress."
>
Princess Serenity shook her head. "I adore this dress, Mother! I've worn it many times and it hasn't ever done this before!" Her dress was a
replica of her mother's.
>
Queen Serenity pulled out a piece of paper and showed it to her daughter. "The tailor has shown me this design several times, and he
would be thrilled if you would try it."
>
Princess Serenity gently took the paper and examined the dress. Poufy sleeves covering only the shoulders, gold lining, pearls, long skirt,
bow in the back, "Oh wow, it's perfect!"
>
The Queen smiled. "I will have it made before the other princesses arrive."

>"They're coming here?!"

>The Queen sighed. "I have told you before, you are not the only princess
in the universe! They are Senshi and they are coming to protect you."
>
The Princess protested, "But Mother! I do not have to share a room,
>do I?! I don't really need protection from them, right?!"

>"Yes you do! So you better be polite to them!"

>The Princess grumbled, "Yes, Mother."

>

>Time: several days later
Place: Out in space, on a space transport
>

>
The transport carrying the other princesses was late arriving. A few of the princesses had not been waiting in the area they were told to wait,
namely Uranus, Jupiter, and Venus. Not only that, but the transport was a slow one, and had to travel to all the planets (minus Earth) before returning
to the moon.
>
The Princesses sat in a separate room from the other passengers to keep from being exposed to diseases, fights, drinking, etc.; over-protectiveness on the part of the Queen. Each had their symbol on their forehead in their aura color, their eyes their aura color, and their hair was of the same color (with the exception of one).
>
The Princess of Venus, a pretty young woman with long golden

blonde

>hair, golden eyes, and a gold toned dress on, whispered in the ear
of a
beautiful young woman next to her that had long, straight
crimson hair,

>red eyes, and a red dress. "Isn't the one with white hair the
tallest
woman you've ever seen?" She had a light, gentle sounding
voice.

>
The other princess smiled. "She sure is! I am the Princess of
Mars, by

>the way." She spoke softly, in a musical voice.

>"And I, Venus. What was your real name, if you do not mind?"

>"Rei, and you?"

>"Minako. Nice to meet you."

>The others, seeing the two introducing themselves, also
introduced
themselves, after the two said their names to everyone
else.

>
A delicate-featured young woman with short blue hair, blue eyes,
and a cerulean

>dress spoke first. "I am called Ami, the Princess of Mercury. It is
a
pleasure to meet you all," she said with a small bow of her
head.

>She spoke in light, soft tones.

>A beautiful woman with long blue green hair that fell in large
waves, blue
green eyes, and a turquoise dress smiled and she
said, "I am Michiru. I am

>the Princess of Neptune." Her voice was gentle and elegant.

>A pretty young woman with wavy green hair, green eyes, wearing an
emerald
toned dress said simply, "Makoto; Jupiter." Her voice was
rich and pleasing

>to hear.

>A woman who was both beautiful and handsome, with short white hair,
deep blue
eyes, wearing an indigo dress said, "Haruka, from
Uranus." Her voice was very

>deep and throaty, but feminine.

>The others nodded to each other.

>One pale princess sat aside, staring out the window. It was hard to
tell
how old she was, for she was short for her age and had no
marks on her

>face at all, save for her symbol. She had rich purple, shoulder
length
hair, skin much paler than the others, and a royal purple
dress. She

>really was more cute than pretty. Seeing the others looking at her,
she
said in a soft, weak voice, "I am Hotaru, from Saturn."

>
She continued to gaze out the window.

>
Unexpectedly, a beautiful, older looking woman from the pilot's
bay, with

>long, blackish-purple hair and eyes, darker skin than the others,
and a very dark
purple dress. "Excuse me, my name is Setsuna, from
Pluto. You may call

>me Pluto. I am the Guardian of Time." She spoke in strong,
confidant
tones.

>
Neptune raised an eyebrow. "I remember you from some of the lore
I have

>read regarding the Original Time."

>Pluto smiled. "I am sure you have, Mi... um, Neptune."

>"It is alright if you call me by my real name. It seems silly to
call us
names from our planets."

>
Uranus yawned and stretched. "So, Guardian, your from the

Original Time?

>What was it like? Were we there?"

>Pluto gave the taller woman a crafty smile. "I could tell you, but I
think you should find out on your own."

>
"Gonna be difficult, huh? That's okay."

>
Pluto smiled and took a seat. A pretty young woman came and sat next to

>her. She had long pink hair, crimson eyes, and a pastel pink dress on.
No symbol marked her forehead. A floating black ball, with cat's ears,

>an antenna, a caricature of a cat's face, and a crescent moon on the
"forehead," followed her in.

>
"This is my friend Usagi. She is traveling with me for awhile."

>
The others nodded. Saturn's purple eyes suddenly went blank, and she

>stared at the wall with wide eyes.

>"Ma'am? Are you alright?" Mars asked. "She must get visions," she said
to the others. "I've seen this happen before."

>
Saturn blinked and shook her head to clear it. "I... had a strange

>vision, we were all in our Senshi uniforms, there was this weird
woman with long black hair..."

>
Usagi cocked her head. "Maybe you, uh, should get some rest."

>
Venus said cheerfully, "I can't wait to see the Moon! Let's play some

>games to make the time fly!"

>Uranus muttered, "Like what? Patty-cake?"

>"That was not nice, Uranus," Mercury said to the tall woman.

>"That was not nice," Uranus mimicked in mocking tones. "Look," she said
in a normal voice, "I don't know about the rest of you, but we need to

>take this seriously! There are wars on Earth and on Mercury right now.
We should be helping there instead of wandering around the Palace playing

>games!"

>Mars glared at her. "The Queen must have a reason that's more important
than playing games!"

>
Venus, still upset from the patty-cake comment, said, "I am sure the wars

>will end peacefully. I heard the Queen sent troops out to break things
up. Besides, the Queen might just want us over there to, well, get to

>know the place. We will have to live their the rest of our lives."

>Uranus snorted, "I don't even KNOW you people! Why should I listen to
that woman?!"

>
"Well, she is our queen, and she's above our parents in power." Neptune said.

>"And Queen Serenity did order us to go out to the Moon."

>"Queen or no queen, I don't like it!" Uranus sat down hard with a grunt. "I
never have listened to my mother or father anyways! They don't care at all!"

>She sighed hard. "I never wanted to be a princess," she grumbled softly in hurt
tones.

>
The others looked at her sympathetically. "Uranus," Venus started, "why

>didn't you just tell her you didn't want to go there?"
>"I had to go!" Uranus said with a sigh. "Going to the Moon isn't nearly as bad
as staying home."

>
Jupiter shrugged. "Well, being a princess means we get to be a Senshi,"

>so if there ARE any wars, we getta fight in 'em!"
>Neptune scowled at Jupiter. "Is that all you care about?! Fighting? That
isn't what is important. What is important is having friends and family

>with you, and loved ones to spend time with, and things to be happy for.
Not punching the brains out of some mind-wiped people!"

>
Neptune stood up and walked out of the room, into a connecting one where

>the commoners, peasants, and criminals stayed.
>"Hey!" Uranus called. "Someone might try to hurt you out there! Get back
in here!" She grumbled and hurried after the other princess.

"You're

>gonna get hurt! There's criminals out there! Hold up, already!"

>"Neptune is right," Mercury said after the woman was out of the room.
"Friends, family, loved ones, and happiness are what is important, not hurting other people."
>The others (except for Jupiter) nodded in agreement.
>They sat in silence until Uranus came back a few minutes later, leading
Neptune by the arm. Their clothing was slightly torn and their hair ruffled.

>"What happened?" Pluto asked.
>"Just what I thought... someone tried to beat her up, so I had to beat
them up, and then the pilot told me to come back here."

>
Neptune had a very haughty look on her face. "I could have handled him!"

>
"Maybe that's why you were lying on the ground in a heap while he kicked you, huh?" Uranus scowled. "Don't try to be tough unless you are. Next
time someone might not come to help you out." Uranus flopped into a seat.

>Neptune shouted, "I could have taken care of myself!"
>Uranus snorted. "You aren't the fighting type. Shouldn't get into them.
So next time, don't go out there with those barbarians!"

>
"You didn't have to crack his skull for what he did! You could have just turned him in!"

>The other princesses were going to add something, when Uranus shouted in
hurt tones, "Well, 'scuse me for caring, Michiru!" Uranus stormed out of the room, towards the same place they just got back from.

>"Hey, where are you going?" Neptune called to her, actually sounding
worried. "Get back here!" She started to go after her.

>
Uranus kept walking. "Why should I?"
>Usagi suddenly threw her floating ball at the back of Uranus' head.

>There was a soft "crack!" and Uranus slumped over. Neptune ran over

to
make sure she was okay. "Hope I didn't hurt her bad," Usagi muttered.

>
Mercury came over to the tall woman. "She'll be okay. She's just >stunned."

>Neptune sighed. "Look, sorry I got mad, but my brothers always treated
me like I was helpless, and you made me feel like I was when you did

>that. Uh, thanks for helping me. You okay?" She helped Uranus sit up.

>Uranus sat up and rubbed her head. "You got a good arm, Usagi," she said
to the pink haired woman with a grin. "Took me by surprise."

>
Pluto smiled. "The transport is arriving soon. Better get seated >everyone."

>Everyone got into their seats quietly. While the captain rambled on
about weather conditions on the moon's surface and other unimportant stuff, Uranus whispered to Neptune, "Sorry I got mad."

>"Me too," the turquoise haired woman said with a smile. "Friends?" She
held out her hand.

>
Uranus squeezed it with a grin. "Friends," she said.

>
"What are things like on your home, anyways?" Mars asked Mercury. "I've >heard stories, but I've never been there... hell, I've never gone anywhere
outside of Mars! Most of the other planets are so much colder I can't >tolerate it!"

>Mercury laughed. "There's not much to say about it. Burning hot in the
summer, freezing in the winter. No plants grow there except for a few >that can handle the harsh conditions."

>"It's always too hot on Mars," the red haired princess continued.
"But we're used to it. This space transport, for example, is too cold >for me."

>"I can handle any temperature now!" Mercury laughed.

>"Yeah, but what would you do if you went to Pluto? It's as cold as
Queen Beryl's heart there!"

>
Both princesses laughed hard as the other Senshi watched them.

>
"I guess some people make friends pretty quick," Jupiter commented.

>
"I guess so," Venus returned.

>

>
Time: after the transport arrives

>Place: a gathering hall in the Palace

>

>The younger Serenity waited impatiently with her much more patient
mother for the other princesses to come in. She was wearing her new dress and wanted to be sure that she looked better than the other
princesses.

>
Her silvery hair was pulled into two odango shaped balls with hair

>trailing out of them, the same style her mother wore. The crescent on
her forehead and her eyes were also silver, but more like real silver

>than the white color of her hair. She wore some pearls in her hair, to
show off, mainly. Her new dress was also white, and several young men
>had told her it looked beautiful on her.
>Her fiance, Prince Endymion from Earth, was with her, wearing a black
tuxedo, white dress shirt, and a red rose tucked into one of the
pockets. So they stood, waiting, for the others to come downstairs.
>The first to come down was Mercury, wearing a blue crushed velvet dress
with a modest neckline, no sleeves, and skirt to just past her ankles,
>with a sapphire necklace and earrings to match. She wore almost no makeup
and had fluffed her hair slightly. Her forehead symbol glowed faintly.
>She curtsied to the Prince and Princess. "I am Ami, Princess of Mercury."
>The younger Serenity smiled. "Nice to meet you."
>Endymion whispered in her ear, "She has an intelligent look to her, doesn't she?"
>
Venus came down right after, wearing a golden dress that was very shiny. It had a high waistline, with thin straps for sleeves, held with tiny gold clasps. She wore gold jewelry and brown toned makeup. Her hair was very straight and shiny, and she had let it hang down instead of in the usual bow. Her symbol shone bright.
>"Minako,
>Princess of Venus, pleased to meet you." She curtsied once and stood by Mercury.
>"Now, she's a very pretty young lady," Endymion commented, then quickly
added, "but you're much prettier." Serenity grinned.
>
The next to come down was Mars. She wore red silk, with a small train,
>off shoulder sleeves, and a slightly drooping neckline. She wore ruby
jewelry and dark red lipstick. Her red hair was worn very straight, and
>was shiny. Mars' symbol glowed bright.
>Princess Serenity recognized a precog when she saw one, and this
definitely was one. "I am Rei, Mars' Princess." The woman curtsied once
>to Princess Serenity, once to Endymion, once to the older Serenity, then
went to stand by Venus. Endymion indicated with a glance at Serenity
>that he thought Mars was very attractive. Serenity suddenly felt the urge
to pinch his arm hard.
>
Next was Jupiter. She wore a dark green dress that looked like it was
made of velvet. It flared at the ankles and had a low neckline with off
shoulder sleeves. She wore emerald jewelry and light red lipstick. Her
>wavy green hair was pulled back high with a dark green ribbon. Her symbol
glowed bright. "I'm Makoto, from Jupiter." She gave a quick curtsy and
>went to stand by Mars. Endymion nodded about her too.
>Saturn came down slowly. She wore a purple satin dress, modest neckline,
thick straps for sleeves, the skirt ending at her ankles. She wore amethyst
>jewelry with light purple lipstick and a little eyeshadow. Her

purple hair
was worn dead straight, and her symbol was hard to look at. "I am Hotaru, >from Saturn." She curtsied and went to stand by Jupiter.

>Princess Serenity whispered to Endymion, "Maybe the glow indicates how
much power they have as Senshi."

>
He nodded. "Probably. Look at Saturn's!" He then grinned. "She's very

>cute, but it really hides how powerful she is, don't you think?" Serenity
nodded in agreement.

>
Uranus came down, and unlike the others, didn't bother with the handrail.

>She wore an indigo dress made of a simple material, not very
fancy like the others, but it accented her extreme height. It stopped at

>her ankles and had a slightly sloping neckline, with small straps for sleeves.
She wore a necklace with a dark blue sapphire on it, and small gold hoop earrings.

>The only makeup she wore was a little lipgloss. Her white hair was worn in her
usual style. Her symbol was a brighter than all but Saturn's. "Haruka, Princess

>of Uranus." She gave an awkward, stiff curtsy, probably just because the Queen was
present. She just nodded her head to the younger Serenity before she went to stand

>by Saturn.

>Endymion was staring with a strange look. "What?" the Moon Princess
whispered.

>
"She's taller than me!" he said in shock. "I mean, she's pretty, but

>look at how tall she is!" Endymion suddenly felt short.

>Serenity laughed and clasped his hand.

>Neptune came down next. Neptune was wearing an aquamarine dress made of a
clearly expensive material. It was very billowy and had a train slightly longer

>than Mars' had been. She had off shoulder, gauzy sleeves made of transparent
material and a low neckline. She wore aquamarine jewelry with dark lipstick.

>Her blue green hair was pulled back in a stylized twist near the top of her head,
with tendrils framing her face. Her symbol was very bright, slightly dimmer than

>Uranus'. She curtsied gracefully before introducing herself and said, "I am
Michiru, the Princess of Neptune. It is nice to finally meet you, Princess Serenity,

>Queen Serenity." She smiled and walked over to stand by Uranus.

>Serenity smiled and squeezed Endymion's hand tighter.

>The last was Pluto. She wore a deep purple satin dress, long but straight.
The dress fit tight, with a fitted skirt and low neckline. She wore

>silver jewelry, and very plain, but grownup makeup. Her extremely dark
purple hair had the top layer pulled into a bun, the rest hanging out.

>Her symbol glowed brighter than Uranus', almost as bright as Saturn's. "I am
Setsuna, Princess of Pluto, and the Guardian of Time." She

>curtsied low and went to stand by Neptune.

>Princess Serenity's eyes widened. "You are... you're HER?!"

>Pluto smiled. "Yes, I am, Princess. I have been for millions of

years
now. Would you like to meet a friend of mine?"

>
Princess Serenity nodded, still stupefied.

>
A young woman came down, her eyes closed. She was wearing a pastel pink

>dress that had a modest neckline, short sleeves, and a skirt came to her
knees. She wore rose quartz jewelry and pink toned makeup. Her long pink

>hair was worn in a braid that came to her waist. No symbol shone on her
forehead. A black ball in the caricature of a cat's head, with a gold

>crescent moon on the "forehead" and an antenna coming from the top of
its head, floated down after her.

>
Pluto smiled. "This is Usagi Tsukino. She is from the Original time."

>
The young woman opened her eyes. They were a bright crimson color, and

>at first, Princess Serenity was very shocked by the color.

>"H-hello," she said to the young woman. My, she looks a bit like me!
Well, except for the hair and the eyes, she thought to herself.

>
Queen Serenity finally chose to speak. "It is good to meet all of you. I

>hope you do not mind, but you will have to share rooms since we don't
have many open."

>
Queen Serenity racked off a list. "Jupiter, you are with Mercury. Mars,

>you are with Venus. Saturn, you are with Pluto. Uranus, you are with
Neptune." She looked up. "Oh, and our young friend Usagi, you are with

>my daughter."

>All nodded. Queen Serenity continued, "I wanted you to dress nice since
we will be introducing you to other members of the Court. Representatives

>from your home planets will be there waiting to see you."

>"They won't even recognize me. They haven't seen me in years," Uranus muttered.

>"Watch your mouth," Queen Serenity said, while Uranus appeared taken aback.

>The Queen kept talking, "In several months, the annual Silver Ball will
be held. I expect you all to have dates by then. You need to make a

>nice impression."

>Princess Serenity squeezed Endymion's hand. Mars, Jupiter, Venus, and Mercury
had hearts in their eyes. "Oh boy!" Jupiter said. "An excuse to be with

>Nephrite! Yay!"

>"You need an excuse?" Venus joked.

>The others laughed.

>Pluto and Saturn both said at the same time, "Do we have to have a
date?"

>
The Queen smiled. "Well, if at the last minute you don't have one and

>someone asks you, you had better take the offer."

>They sighed disappointedly.

>Uranus kicked her foot on the floor nervously. "Uh, what if no one wants
to go with us. I mean, I'm sure someone would actually ASK Saturn and

>Pluto. I don't think anyone will ask me."
>The Queen was silent for a moment. "Why do you say that, Uranus?"
>She shrugged. "I mean, I am not exactly pretty, and I'm taller than most
of the guys in your kingdom... I scare more guys than I attract!"
>
The Queen chuckled. "I am sure that I can arrange a date for you."
>
Uranus grumbled and crossed her arms. "Why can't I just go stag?"
>
Neptune laughed. "Practically everyone with any wealth at all in the system is coming. You have to appear to be well liked; make a good
impression." She then chuckled and nudged Uranus in the ribs with her elbow. "Besides, you are pretty when you get right down to it! I'm sure
someone will ask you!"
>Uranus snorted, "You don't have a problem getting a date! Practically every guy who sees ya will ask you to go with him!"
>Neptune blushed. "Oh REALLY? Why do you say that?"
>Uranus turned red. "Uh, you, um... uh..."
>Venus giggled. "Well, Neptune, I think she means to say you are very
pretty."
>Neptune smiled. "Thank you for actually speaking," she said, giving Uranus a look.
>Uranus turned redder. "I, uh, Queen Serenity?! I, um, heard you have
two, uh, rather unique advisors?"
>
The Queen chuckled. "Yes, I do. I'll ask them to come down." She went upstairs and was gone a few minutes.
>As soon as she was gone, all the Princesses except Uranus burst out
laughing. Usagi and Endymion laughed too, and Endymion gave a playful punch to the Princess' arm. "Well, you sure have a way with words,
Uranus."
>
Uranus was fuming. "Ooooo... .just... shut-up! I haven't exactly gotten to talk to other people besides my father in years so of
course I won't be a good speaker, okay?!" She raced up the stairs to where the Queen had said her room was.
>The Princesses stopped laughing. "I think we hurt her feelings," Mercury
said softly.
>
"I guess we shouldn't have laughed," Jupiter said, looking down at her feet. "I mean, she seems a bit... disturbed. Not mentally, but something's
obviously wrong back home. I noticed a bad bruise on her back earlier."
>
It was quiet for a little while. Usagi broke the silence by saying,
>"Maybe someone should go check on her."
>Neptune went upstairs, clutching her skirts to keep from tripping over
them.
>
Queen Serenity came down, noting the absence of the two. She didn't mention it, but presented two cats, one a black female with orange-gold
eyes, the other a white male with blue eyes, both with gold crescent

>moons on their foreheads. "This is Luna," she said pointing to the black
black
one, "and this is Artemis. These are my advisors."

>
"Advisors? But they are... cats?!" Jupiter started laughing.

>
"Excuse me, I have very good advise to share, young lady." The voice

>came from around Serenity's feet.

>Jupiter stared in shock at the black cat. "You... talk?"

>"So do I!" the white one said in hurt tones.

>Usagi giggled, and her ball floated over to Luna. "Luna, meet
Luna-P.
Luna-P, Luna."

>
Luna stared at the ball. "It-it-it... what is the meaning of
this?!"

>
Artemis laughed, "It looks kinda like you!" He swiped at the
ball, which

>bounced on his head and caused him to topple backwards, paws up.

>Venus picked up the cat. "Aw... what a cute kitty!" she said in
a
teasing voice, squeezing him tight. "Maybe we can play tea time
later!"

>
Artemis scrambled from her arms, wailing, "Not tea time!

Anything...

>well, almost anything but tea time!"

>Luna sniffed. "How childish of you, Artemis." She sat back on her
hind
legs, cleaning her front paws daintily. "Show some manners.
Decline

>politely."

>He said in sarcastic tones to Venus, eyes closed, an
over-exaggerated
look of dignity on his face, "I am dreadfully
sorry, dear Princess, but

>I am afraid that the cat over there has decided I shan't go to
your
lovely tea party. Do forgive me." He gave a mock bow.

>
The Princesses giggled. "Oh, quite alright, my friend," Venus
said. "I

>shall hold it another time then." She gave a joking, exaggerated
sigh.

>Neptune and Uranus came back downstairs, Uranus' face slightly
tear
streaked. Princess Serenity cocked her head and asked if she
was okay,

>but the tall princess just muttered, "I'm alright, I'm alright! Why
does
everyone ask me that?"

>
Neptune rolled her eyes. "Ever considered that we might be
concerned

>about you? We all have to live together, we'll have to be like
sisters.
And we are going to look after you whether you like it or
not!"

>
Uranus grunted and flopped into a chair. "I just wanna be left
alone. I don't

>like it here. Every sound you make echoes, and everywhere you go you
see
these guys in fancy suits standing by the doors. I hate it!"
She crossed

>her arms and refused to say another word.

>Venus, meanwhile, was forming a fast friendship with the
younger
Serenity. They talked and giggled the whole time the group
of

>princesses was together. Most of the others were quiet and didn't
say
much... Saturn didn't say a word.

>
Serenity suddenly realized that she never really introduced

Endymion.

>"Oh yeah, hey everybody!" she called out. The Princesses turned to look
at her. She squeezed Endymion's hand and said, "I forgot to introduce Prince

>Endymion of Earth. I'm engaged to him."

>"Whoo-hoo!" Venus said, nudging her in the ribs. "You go girl!"

>Endymion chuckled and Serenity turned red. "I think we're a cute
couple," he said, as he dipped her low in his arms and kissed her.

>
The Princesses (except Saturn) all simultaneously went,
"Whoaaaa!"

>
Endymion stood up straight again, and Serenity straightened her hair, as

>blush staining her cheeks.

>Queen Serenity finally said, "Well, it's time for you to make an
appearance. Come on." She led them out to a balcony over looking the

>large garden. Hundreds of representatives from each of the planets were
there.

>
"Whoa," Mars said, eyes wide. "That is a lot of people."

>
Queen Serenity smiled. "I suggest you go in planet order. Just say your

>name, what planet you are from, and line up after."

>Mercury walked out nervously. "I am Ami, Princess of Mercury." She
quickly moved to the side.

>
Venus walked out, curtsied lady-like, and said, "I am Minako, Princess

>of Venus." She waved to someone she knew before she moved over next to
Mercury.

>
Mars also curtsied. "I am Rei of Mars." She moved next to Venus.

>
Jupiter waved and said, "I'm Makoto from Jupiter." She walked next

>to Mars.

>Saturn came out and said as loud as she could (which wasn't that loud),
"Hotaru of Saturn." She moved over by Jupiter.

>
Uranus walked out and simply said, "Haruka from Uranus," and moved over

>by Saturn.

>Neptune came out and curtsied. "I am Michiru, Princess of Neptune," she
said before rising to stand by Uranus.

>
Pluto walked out, nodded to someone she knew, and said as the Queen had

>told her, "I am Setsuna, Pluto's Princess, called the Guardian of Time."
As she went to stand by Neptune, she heard a few gasps in the crowd.

>
Princess Serenity was last, and she curtsied prettily and said,

>"Princess Serenity, the Moon Princess."

>The Queen came out and gave a speech while the Princesses stood, trying
not to fidget under the stares of the crowd.

>
Uranus cracked a few jokes, and the others had to hold their laughs in.

>They couldn't resist when she slyly knocked the wig off one of the
guards. As it was, most of the crowd laughed, and the guard turned red

>in the face. Jupiter joined in on the antics, standing behind the

queen
and waving her arms around in exaggerated mimics of her hand gestures.

>
Princess Serenity barely managed (with much difficulty since she was
>laughing too) to calm everyone down. Queen Serenity gave Uranus and Jupiter
an unamused look, then continued her speech.

>

> _____

>
 THREE

>

>

>
Time: Two months later

>Place: Venus and Mars' room, the Palace

>Venus woke up and yawned. Mars was already up, and was whispering some
strange prayer to herself. They had become good friends, as most of the

>Princesses had with each other.

>The Queen was proud to notice improvements in the Princesses' behavior
when they had been around each other awhile. Mercury tried to be more

>sure of herself when she spoke. Venus didn't giggle as much.

Princess
Serenity was learning good manners from Venus and Neptune, and also was

>showing much more grace than before. Mars was learning to control her
temper. Jupiter was trying to be more princess like. Saturn actually spoke

>up and went outside with the others, putting some color in her cheeks.
Uranus was getting used to being around other people.

Neptune wasn't

>getting as mad at people as she had been when she first got there. Pluto...
no one seemed to be able to tell about Pluto. She had disappeared for the first

>month with her friend Usagi, who never spoke unless she had to. They
came back after several weeks, acting as if they'd never left. Pluto's purple

>hair had turned green though.

>The Queen had also noticed groups form between the women. Mars, Venus,
Jupiter, and Serenity always were together. They liked to joke and laugh

>and eat food that Jupiter would cook. Mercury was usually alone
studying, and Saturn was always staring into space. Pluto stayed with

>Usagi most of the time, whenever they were actually at the Palace.
Neptune always hung around Uranus. They had finally stopped arguing so

>much and were now extremely close friends.

>Everyone had gotten together for a "cookout" in the gardens, among the pink,
white, and (the extremely rare) red roses. Serenity adored the flowers,

>talking on and on about how they reminded her of Endymion. Uranus not too
subtly gagged. Neptune poked her arm, a sly smile on her face.

>
Serenity continued to talk in a swoon while Mars, Venus, and Jupiter

>discussed the latest gossip. Mercury was doing some obscure writing in
the Mercurian language. Saturn stared at the sky. Pluto was chatting

>with Uranus and Neptune, and Usagi actually joined in.

>Mars laughed loudly at something Jupiter said, then reached over and
plucked a red rose off a bush. Serenity scowled at her, but

Mars just
>put it behind one ear. "I think it goes perfectly with my hair,"
she
said with a smile.
>
The others except her (and Serenity and Saturn) laughed. Uranus reached
>over and plucked a white one off, and handed a pink one to Usagi.
They
also slipped them behind their ears, giving silly model poses
as the
>others laughed.

>The others also snapped off roses for their hair, and everyone,
even
Saturn, began to talk happily with each other. "They all seem
to be
>happy here," Pluto whispered to Usagi. Usagi smiled and nodded in
agreement.

>The girls continued chatting and Jupiter skipped off excitedly off
to
check on the food. Uranus grinned and said softly to the
others, "Maybe
>Nephrite is hiding in the kitchen!"

>They all laughed and tried to quiet down when Jupiter walked back,
but
most of them were still giggling. "What's so funny?" Jupiter
demanded.
>
Uranus took a long drink of her lemonade. "Oh, nothing," she
said,
>wiping off her mouth before she brought the glass back to her
lips.

>Mars grinned. "Actually, she told us she thinks maybe Nephrite was
in
the kitchen..."
>
Jupiter turned red. "No, he was not!"
>
The other princesses started laughing loudly. "C'mon, Makoto,"
Mars said,
>"everyone knows how close the two of you are!"

>"Oh yeah, what about you and Jadeite, hmmm?"

>Mars blushed while everyone else laughed harder.

>"When's the wedding, Serenity?" Neptune asked.

>"What?!" Serenity gasped with shock.

>"Well, you two _are_ engaged..."

>"Actually... we haven't decided yet."

>The princesses nearly fell out of their chairs. "Oh... well..."

>"They are happy here, alright," Usagi commented to Pluto.

>Uranus turned and grinned at Mercury. "So how's your
boyyyyyyfriend,
Mercury? Have you seen your little Kunzite
lately?"
>
Mercury blushed brightly. "N-not really..."
>
"But you sure do miss him alot, hmmm?"
>
"Yeahhhh..."
>
"It's funny to think that _you_ have a boyfriend, what with all
that
>time you spend reading and studying," Uranus teased.

>Mercury looked at her with an amused look. "Well, at least I have
one.
What about you? You don't have anyone."
>
Uranus seemed taken aback. "Well, I... er..."
>
The other princesses laughed. "Why is it that none of the Outer
Senshi
>are attached to anyone?" Mars commented her.

>Saturn looked at and said, "Well, I probably speak only for Setsuna
and
myself, but we just don't feel like letting anyone into our
lives."
>
"Why only for you and Setsuna? Perhaps *gasp* Uranus has a

secret crush!"

>
She started laughing while Uranus glared at her. "Well, I sure won't tell

>_you_ who I--" Uranus stopped in midsentence.

>"Oh you do, don't you?!" Mars laughed harder.

>"What about you, Neptune? Are you interested in anyone?" Jupiter asked.

>Neptune blinked rapidly several times. "Well... yes..."

>"That's all you have to tell us," Jupiter told her. "No point in _teasing_
people."

>
Mars stopped laughing. "Oooops. Sorry, Uranus."

>
Uranus crossed her arms. "Hmph!"

>
"Oooooo!" Venus suddenly gasped, dashing off towards a group of trees.

>"There's a cuuuute bunny over there!!!!"

>"Bunny?!" Serenity squealed, running off after her.

>"What's so great about a rabbit?" Jupiter asked quizzically.

"They're
everywhere back home."

>
"Rabbit?" Neptune asked in a puzzled voice. "I've never seen a rabbit..."

>
"I haven't seen one either," Mars commented, "but I wouldn't jump to--"

>She suddenly stopped and turned around. "What the-- I thought I sensed
someone... but no one's around."

>
"Aw, don't worry too much about it," Uranus told her. "If there was someone

>there, we'd see them..." Unless they're hidden with magic, she silently
added.

>
Mars had been right though. The hidden figure was Kunzite, who was busy

>observing the Princesses with a wary eye. "Mars almost noticed me. I'll
have to be more careful," he thought to himself. Kunzite looked around

>some more. "Beryl wants me to discover the princess's weaknesses, but I
can't see any that would be helpful in a battle. Us Generals know the

>weaknesses of Mars, Venus, and Mercury, but not the others. Nephrite
hasn't been filled with enough dark energy to turn to our side yet, and

>Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, and Saturn are almost entirely unknown to us."
He checked the sky, noting where the sun was. "I've been here too long

>already... I should leave."

>Mars, who was busy talking with Serenity and Venus (they'd returned after
an unsuccessful search for the rabbit) stopped talking again when the

>foreboding feeling left. "Now that person, whoever it was, is gone!" she
growled. "What's going on?!"

>
Saturn looked at her and said, "I felt it too. You don't think it was

>a Dark Kingdom spy, do you?"

>Mars bit her lip. "I don't know... I'm worried though..."

>A young woman with green eyes and wavy shoulder length, auburn hair came
running up the garden path, waving a paper in hand excitedly. "Hey! Hey

>there! There's a scavenger hunt going on soon! Do any of you want to join?!"
She stopped short when she approached. "Oh! You're the princesses, aren't you?!"

>
The princesses looked at her with surprised faces. "Yes, we

are," Jupiter
>said. "What is this 'scavenger hunt'?"
>The young woman talked excitedly, "Well, you see, we form teams, and we're
given either a paper or crystal with items listed on it, and we have to
>go around the palace grounds and find the items! The first team back will
win a really neat prize..." she then stopped and seemed to think hard. "They
>won't say what it is though... Anyways, I need a team of at least ten people,
so I saw all of you sitting over here and wanted to know if you would want
>to join me. I haven't gotten a team yet."
>"Sounds like fun!" Jupiter said. "What does everyone think... ?" The others
nodded in agreement. "Waitaminute!" she suddenly exclaimed.
"What about all
>that food I made?!"
>The young woman laughed. "It doesn't start for another hour! Hey, I'll sign you
up on my team. Meet me in front of the palace in fourty-five minutes to tell
>the people running the contest that you're on my team, okay? The name's Naru.
See ya later!"
>
She waved and ran off.
>
"This should be interesting..." Mercury commented.

>
"Yeah... interesting..." Usagi drew out slowly.
>
The others all laughed.
>

>
Time: Forty-five minutes later
>Place: The front of the palace
>
>The princesses were prompt and arrived exactly when Naru had told them to.
The only one missing was Usagi, who'd declined at the last minute for unknown
>reasons.
>The chirpy red head waved quickly, shouting at them to come over to where
she was. "Hey hey hey!!! Come over and sign in!!!"

>
The princesses received several confused, skeptical looks as they filled out
>the papers. "Why are all those people staring?" Venus asked Naru.
>Naru looked at her in disbelief. "You're the princesses. I mean, to have
people as famous as you guys are participate in something like this is... is...
>well, it doesn't happen often."
>"So what do we get if we win?" Mars asked.
>Naru looked around blankly. "Er... well... I don't know. They didn't say when
we signed up."
>
The princesses promptly fell over with large sweatdrops on their heads.
>
A man came around and handed out sheets with the items listed on them.
>
"What the-- Ureshii flowers?! Where are we supposed to find those?!"
>
"How are we supposed to get 5 Tenshi crystal made on Venus?!"

>
"A frozen salmon?"
>
"No one said it'd be easy," Naru told them. "Look, why don't we split into groups
>of two, to cover more ground? If everyone takes a communications

crystal with them,
we'll be able to tell each other when we've found something so we can mark it off."

>
Serenity sighed. "They better give out good prizes!"

>
"Well, every team gets something..."

>
An announcer started shouting, "Remember, there's only two hours to find everything!"

>Come back here when done! Ready... set... go!"

>"Eeeeeek!!" Serenity shrieked. "Let's get started!"

>After some chaos with picking groups, the girls finally set off in search of the
wacky items.

>

>
Naru and Serenity were wandering around a forest near the palace. "I know Kon-iro

>birds live here... but how are we going to get one of their feathers?" Serenity
asked Naru.

>
"Hmmm... I dunno..." She then tripped over the root of a tree. "Ow! What the--"

>as she bent over to inspect her ankle, her eyes widened. "Hey... I think this's it!"
She grabbed the crystal out of her pocket. "Hey everybody! Mark off Kon-iro bird

>feather!"

>"Yay!" Serenity cheered, jumping up and down. "We were the first to find something!"

>She turned around to walk out of the forest and was surprised to see the path
they'd taken had disappeared. "Uh... oh...."

>
Naru started shrieking in anger, "How the heck will we get out of here now!"

>
Serenity started pulling her long hair and cried out, "I don't know! I don't know!"

>I don't--" she suddenly stopped and sweatdropped. "Naru... you're Martian, right?"

>"Yeah, why?"

>"So, you're good at telekinesis, right?"

>"Yeah..."

>"Well... I can fly... so..."

>Naru repressed the urge to bop her on the head. "So you're saying I should just float
myself out? I guess that would work... eh... eh heh heh..."

>
Both girls continued sweatdropping as they floated out of the forest.

>
"So... um, how'd you know I was Martian?"

>
"Well, judging from your hair color, you could only be from Mars, Earth, or Pluto, and

>your skin is too light for a Plutonian and your accent is different from most Terrans..."

>"Oh..." Naru looked around at the area where they'd landed. She started walking around,
before she stopped short and looked hard at the ground. "Is it just me, or does it feel like we're really lost?"

>"Actually," Serenity said, "I have the same feeling."

>The two sighed as they wandered around aimlessly, hoping to find some way out of the forest.

>

>"Man, it's hard to find these things," Jupiter griped as she pocketed a glowing round
crystal. "I mean, hardly anyone has them anymore. And we had to spend some of our

>own money to get it."

>Mercury sighed as she finished pocketing the communications crystal. "It was only
a little bit. It wasn't even Tenshi crystal. Besides,

it'll be worth it when we get
>the prize."
>"I hope it's a good one. Shelling out thirty gil just for a tensai gem. I could've
bought myself five good meals at the Kai-mono plaza for that much. And by the way,
>gil is worth more than Tenshi crystal! Far more than the Mercos you use back home.
The Outer planets all use gil, you know."
>
"I know, I know!" Mercury said.
>
"Just checking," Jupiter said.
>
"Maybe they'll let you keep the gem after the scavenger hunt is over," Mercury suggested.
>"They're supposed to bring good luck and increase mental capabilities."
>Jupiter glared at her as she weaved through the crowd of people in the shopping area.
"Are you saying I need it?"
>
"No! No, I was just saying that since you paid for it, you should get to keep it."
>
"Good." Jupiter shoved her away through until they reached an alley way. She looked
over the list of items. "We still have alot more to go. Let's hope everyone else
finds more things than us. At this rate--"
>
"Hey, Serenity and Naru already found the feather. Venus and Mars just checked in, and
>they found 5 Venusian Tenshi crystal. Neptune said that she and Uranus are almost to
the spot where the Ureshii flowers grow. Pluto and Saturn already found a frozen salmon
>and a piece of red clay."
>Jupiter nodded. "Well, that's good. What should we look for now?"
>"Hmmm... how about... a scrap of blue silk?"
>Jupiter grinned. "Go to your closet and cut off a piece from one of your dresses. Simple
as that."
>
"They want a receipt for it..."
>
Jupiter's green eyes widened in surprise. "A RECEIPT? I suppose they need a receipt for the
>salmon too."
>Mercury laughed. "No, just this one. C'mon, the dressmaker's shop should be just around
the corner."
>
The two princesses wormed their way through the crowd again, Jupiter following the blue
>haired woman until they reached a small shop.
>"Closed?" Mercury said with disbelief. "But it's the only dressmaker for several miles!"
>"Howsabout bringing some scissors to your closet now?" Jupiter said with a grin.
>Mercury sighed.
>
>Mars stamped her foot on the ground and shrieked, "Just what do you think you're doing,
Minako!?!?"
>
Venus sweatdropped and turned around. "It says we need an ofuda..."
>
"Well, who said we'd use one of mine? Let's just go to the charm shop and buy one."
>
"But this is easier," Venus whined.
>
Mars sighed. "Look, I don't want to waste one of my ofuda on a scavenger hunt, okay?!"
>
Venus pouted. "Fine then. Let's walk five miles until we get to the nearest charm shop..."
>
"And on the way we can find other items," Mars cut in.

>
Venus sweatdropped again. "Oh yeah."
>
Mars sighed as she arranged her red skirts. "Really, Minako, it isn't that hard." Mars
>started to lead the way as they walked through the streets in the direction of the charm
shop. She was momentarily distracted when a flier caught her eye. "Wha-- a party? Tonight!"
>Ooo! And it's at that new club too!"

>"Where?!" Venus was suddenly standing next to Mars as they excitedly read it. "Only 3 Tenshi
for admission! What a deal!"
>
Mars suddenly pulled the list out of her pocket. "Hey, it says we need to bring a flier--"
>
">--and we'll need this one anyways to show everyone!" Venus chirped as she ripped it off
>the sign post.

>Mars laughed as they continued along the trail. "I guess we really shouldn't take this
thing too seriously. It's just a game after all."
>
">Yup!" Venus said, twirling around as she called everyone on the crystal. "Hey everybody,
>we found a flier and guess what? It's for a party! Whee!" She put the crystal away and
started skipping.
>
Mars laughed at her. "You're acting nuts."
>
Venus just giggled. "Maybe I am!" She bent down and pulled a flower out of the ground.
>"Hmmm... wonder where Zoisite is off at? Haven't spoken with him in awhile..."

>"Really? I haven't heard from Jadeite in awhile..."

>They both sighed. "Oh well..."

>"Hey, you are going to go to the party, right?" Venus asked.

>"Of course!"

>The two laughed and walked off, searching for more items as they went.

>

>"Ah, this is where it is!" Neptune led Uranus through a thick forest until they reached
large field of grass whose blades were just barely shorter than Uranus. "Can you still
>see the lake?"

>"Just a little," Uranus said. "It's hard to see around all this grass."

>Neptune laughed. "Come on, it's hard to find the entrance... ah!
Here we are!"

>Neptune pushed across the grass, revealing a hole about three feet in diameter.

>Uranus was shocked and stooped down to look at it. "You wouldn't even know it was here
unless you fell into it!"
>
">Well... I sorta did!" The two women laughed. "C'mon, we better get in. It's a long way
>down."

>"Er, a long drop?"

>"No, no, no, that's not what I meant! It's not a big drop, but it'll take us awhile to
get down to the cave where the flowers are."
>
Neptune slid into the hole, dropping several feet before she landed on hard stone. Uranus
>followed right after.

>"Ughh... this cave sure is damp," Uranus complained.

>"Well, Ureshii flowers are only grown here, unless you want to go to Neptune,"
Neptune commented. "C'mon, let's get going."

>
Uranus sighed as they climbed down a steep trail of rocks. "I hope it is lighter
>and drier where these flowers grow."

>Neptune laughed. "It's very pretty. I've been down here before."

>Uranus slipped on a rock and barely caught herself before tumbling down. "God, do
we have to climb these to get out?!"
>
"No," Neptune said, shaking her head. "We do have to take a hard route though."
>
"We had better get a good prize for this," Uranus grumbled.

>
"Almost there," Neptune commented, as they were plunged into pitch black. "Be
>careful as we turn this corner."

>"I can't see where I'm--" Uranus cut off as blinding light pierced her eyes. "Ow!
Are we there?"
>
"You can open your eyes," Neptune teased, pulling Uranus's hands away from her face.
>"Look."

>Uranus was speechless with awe. The high ceiling of the cave was multihued and glowed
with bright light. Tiny crystals encrusted the shimmering walls, with several larger ones embedded in the surface. The floor was covered with thin, silver grass, with
several large patches of bright flowers scattered around. A tiny waterfall fell into a pool of water in the center, partially surrounded with tall, blue rocks.

>"It's... wonderful..." Uranus breathed.

>Neptune smiled. "It reminds me of a place I used to go to back home."

>Uranus knelt by a patch of flowers. "I'm guessing these are the Ureshii flowers?"

>Neptune nodded, pulling the crystal out to tell everyone they'd found them.
She then walked over to where Uranus sat, looking around at their surroundings.
>
"I've never seen anything like this!" Uranus said. "Uranus is so dismal... and the
>Palace is so... different..."

>Neptune smiled to her and sat down. "I know. That's why I told the others we'd look
for the flowers... I wanted you to see this. I don't think anyone else has ever
>come here. When I first found it, everything was undisturbed. There was no evidence
that anyone had come. When we came here, I only saw the marks my feet had made last
>time."

>Uranus looked over to her. "So it's sort of like your own special place, just for
you?"
>
Neptune nodded.
>
"Why'd you want _me_ to come here then?"
>
Neptune shrugged, blushing faintly. "I don't know. I wanted to keep it to myself at
>first, but then I thought you'd like it."

>"I do," Uranus said, scooting over close to her. "It's beautiful..." she said softly.
"You know... I, um, I think _you_ are very beautiful, Michiru..."
>
Neptune looked over at her with a surprised face. "Why do you say th--"
>
Uranus pressed a finger to her lips, before she leaned close and wrapped her arms

>around Neptune, then kissed her lips gently. Neptune sat still in shock, then
relaxed into Uranus's embrace, wrapping her arms around the other woman's neck and
>pulling them deeper into the kiss. Uranus pulled back very slightly, then kissed
her again with more passion than before. After several seconds, she pulled away and
>sat still holding the other in a loose embrace. Neptune looked at her with a shocked
face, unsure of what to do.

>
"H-Haruka... I... I lo..." Neptune fumbled for words, stuttering with confusion.

>
Uranus quickly stood up, clasping her hands to her mouth as if shocked by what she'd done. She ran in the direction they'd entered from. "Haruka, wait!" Neptune cried,
stopping only long enough to tuck a flower into a bag she carried before running off
>after the distraught Uranus.

>

>Pluto and Saturn weren't very thrilled to be in the scavenger hunt, but nevertheless,
they kept an eye out for any items that were on the list.

>
"I don't know why, but it feels cold here," Pluto commented. She looked around them

>suspiciously. "It feels foreboding..."

>"Hmmm... I know what you mean," Saturn said, her purple eyes scanning the trees
around them. "I've been getting bad feelings all day... and during the picnic,

>I sensed someone there, and so did Mars. I'm not sure who it was though."

>Pluto's dark red eyes widened. "Really? Hmmm..." She thought hard for several minutes
with her brow furrowed. "That's strange... I've tried over and over, but I can't

>scan time. It's been like this ever since..." her voice trailed off.

>"Ever since when?" Saturn asked. After a moment of silence, she added, "Since
the Original Time, hasn't it?"

>
Pluto nodded. "I don't know why though..."

>
Saturn looked around them. "There's a tree over there with white bark. That's on

>the list, right?"

>Pluto nodded.

>Saturn turned around to her. "Try not to worry so hard about it. You should feel
lucky that your powers aren't as strong. What if you did know your destiny? What

>would you have to live for if you already knew what would happen? Maybe you are
unconsciously supressing your abilities. I have to do that with mine. I'm so

>sensitive to life and death..." she shuddered slightly, "that if I didn't keep
my sensitivity towards them buried, I'd go insane. I can feel everyone's life energy,

>slowing dwindling... weakening... coming closer to death..." she clasped her head
tightly, her fingers knotting in her purple locks. "AHhhHh! I'm losing control again!"

>
As Saturn fell to her knees, Pluto rushed over to her. "Hotaru!
Control it! Hotaru!"

>
Saturn shook slightly and wiped sweat away from her forehead.

"I-I'm sorry... it

>happens sometimes..."

>Pluto stared at her hard. "Listen to me, Saturn. No matter what you do, you can
never lose control completely. Never do that. You

hear me? The consequences would
>be too great."
>Saturn nodded. "I know... I try..."
>"I don't mean to be too harsh, but trying isn't always enough."
Pluto helped the tiny
woman stand. "To protect the universe, you
must. "
>
>
After the two hours were up, all the groups had returned to the
meeting place to
>see who had won. Serenity and Naru seemed a bit tired and explained
how they'd
wandered around for so long and only got one time.
Mercury and Jupiter had several
>items and were in good spirits. Mars and Venus had the most by far,
and for some
reason couldn't stop laughing. Uranus was standing
unusually far away from Neptune,
>and seemed afraid to look at her, while Neptune held the bag of
items with a faraway
look on her face. Pluto and Saturn had a few
items, and seemed serious despite the
>fact that it was only for fun.
>A man came by and collected all the items to total up. "Wow, that
was fun, except
for the getting lost part," Naru told them. "I
mean, Serenity and I chatted for
>awhile and stuff. Maybe we should do stuff like this more often,
everyone!"
>Mercury groaned. "I had to cut one of my dresses--"
>"--and I spent thirty gil to get that gem!" Jupiter finished.

>Mars laughed a bit. "Don't worry, Mako, they should let you keep
it."
>"Hope so. It cost me enough."
>Venus giggled a bit, then turned to Uranus. "Hey, something wrong?
You seem a bit
... well, different than usual."
>
"I-I'm fine. Just ignore me..."
>
Venus looked at her with concerned eyes. "Stop by my room later
and talk to me."
>
"Why should I?"
>
"Just do it," Venus told her.
>
Naru started squeeling, "He's gonna announce the winner!"
>
The man looked over a sheet and announced, "The first place
winner is... Osaka Naru
>and the princesses."
>"Yayyyy!" Serenity cheered.
>A woman with lavender hair came over to them. "Congratulations, you
all receive
an amount of money equal to 200 Tenshi crystal. So if
you prefer gil, we'll give
>you the equivalent. You each receive a free ticket for a round trip
on a space
transport."
>
"Um, great!" Jupiter said, trying to sound excited.
>
The woman gave them each their prize and left.
>
"A ticket?" Mercury said. "And 1000 Mercos... not bad."
>
"1000?! No way!" Naru cried.
>
Meercury covered her mouth and tried not to laugh. "Naru...
Mercos aren't worth
>alot... it takes five just to equal one Tenshi crystal."

>"Oh... "
>"How much gil did you get?" Venus asked Saturn.
>"Hmmm... I don't know..." Saturn was staring off in to space. "Not

much..."
>Pluto laughed. "Gil is worth alot though!"
>"Oh!" Mars pulled out the flier. "Hey everyone, we found a flier for a party.
Why don't we go?" She passed it around for everyone to see. "We don't get out of the palace much. Let's go have some fun for once."
>"That's a good idea," Jupiter said. "Let's do it."
>"I'm afraid not," Pluto said. "The queen wanted us to meet tonight. Besides,
did you read that flier carefully? That club is in a bad neighborhood, one of >the very few on the Moon where there's actually crime."
>"Awwwww...." several of the princesses said in unision.
>"Well, our duties are more important than fun... I guess..." Serenity said,
but she still seemed upset.>
"We better get back if we want to be on time," Mercury said. "The queen will >hate it if we're late. Nice meeting you, Naru."
>The other princesses said similar things to Naru before they left.
>"See ya later!" Naru said with a wave.
>"See ya!" Serenity said as the princesses walked off into the palace.
>
>Time: an hour and a half later.
Place: Venus and Mars' room, the Palace >
>
Mars sat painting her nails while Venus looked out the window with a >bored look. "That meeting was so dull. I almost fell asleep."
>Mars blew her nails and commented, "We had to be there. Like Serenity.
said, our duties are more important than fun." >
Venus flopped back on the window seat. "Yeah, but we spend too much time >here in the palace. We need to _do_ something for once."
>"Speaking of that, where are Usagi and Pluto going off to? They mentioned
in the meeting they'd be leaving for a couple of weeks." >
"Who knows," Venus moaned. "At least _they_ get to leave." >
Mars pointed a scolding finger at her and said, "Stop moping around and >feeling sorry for yourself. Some of the others are happier here than
they were at home. And besides, we're Senshi. That's got to count for >something."
>"Yeah, but it really isn't like we were picked specially or anything.
They didn't care who we were. We just happened to have the mark and >were picked. What about Mercury and Uranus? Mercury is an only child
and Uranus had no sisters. They're only senshi because they're girls and >royalty. I'm not saying they aren't qualified, but when you think about it,
we were just born into this. Anyone else could do this, but we were picked >by fate."

>Mars narrowed her eyes. "Yes, but fate probably arranged it so we
would
be picked. Just because it wasn't a person that selected us
doesn't mean
>that we weren't specially selected."

>Venus paused for several moments, before grudgingly commenting, "I
guess you're
right."
>
"I am, aren't I?"
>

>END RESURRECTION ~~~ NEXT: AWAKENINGS <div>

2. Awakenings

~~SILVERMOON~~

> Awakenings
 Four through Six
> a Bishoujo Senshi Sailormoon fanfiction by Immora

> _____

>Please see the author's notes in Resurrection for all copyright

information.

>
I apologize for the awful line-wrapping.

>

>

> FOUR

> _____

>

>Time: a couple weeks later
Place: a breakfast hall, the Palace

>

>
Everyone had gone downstairs for breakfast, still wearing their

>nightgownspajamas, all except Pluto and Usagi (who just got back)

>were very tired. Jupiter had cooked it herself. Everyone
complimented
her on the dish. As they ate, Pluto noticed a
silence in the air, as if

>everyone was somehow... afraid of something. She noted this with a
frown.
"Is something wrong?" She pushed her sausage around on her
plate.

>"Everyone is so quiet..."

>Uranus smiled. "Pluto, you weren't at the meetings recently!"

You
wouldn't understand."

>
Pluto raised an eyebrow. "Oh, I wouldn't?"

>
Uranus nodded. "I don't think you'd be able to... follow... what
is

>going on since you haven't been here..."

>"So you are saying I'm stupid and wouldn't comprehend?"

>Uranus turned red. Neptune touched her friend's hand, then turned
to
Pluto. "I think what she means is that since we've had so many

>meetings, covering so many things... she isn't sure if you would be
able
to... follow... what is going on since you weren't here for
the whole

>story."

>Pluto folded her fingers together. "The rebellion on the Inner
Planet
space platform? I knew about it. The question is, what will
we do about

>it?"
>Mercury shook her head and said softly, "We could fight them... but we
cannot do that..."
>The space platform was sort of huge, flat floating platform located between Earth and its moon. It had man-made structures on it and was the
hub of travel between the Inner Planets. It had tons of space docks, >shops, convention centers, and many places for living. The Outer Planets
shared one between Uranus and Neptune, and then there was another >between the Inner and Outer Planets.
>"What if we are forced to?" Jupiter snapped. "I don't mean to jump to
conclusions, but the Dark Kingdom could be involved."
>"Well, that's possi--"
>Saturn and Mars suddenly snapped up, their eyes blank. The first to recover, Saturn whispered forcefully, "I... sense an evil presence...
at the Inner Planet space platform!"
"Who is it?!"
Mars searched. "The Dark Kingdom sent someone... they-they've corrupted the people there! They-they've been turned into youma! The Dark Kingdom
plans to use them to take over the system... you were right..." She rested her head in her hands. "Why didn't we sense this sooner? They're
building troops up fast... it won't take long for them to be ready to attack... maybe an hour..."
Serenity bit her lip. "I better contact Mother!"
She closed her eyes and the Moon symbol on her forehead glowed. All the
princesses possessed telepathy, telekinesis, and flight, but the Lunar were also naturally strong in telepathy.
In only a few seconds, Serenity opened her eyes. "M-mother says that the
Senshi... need to go there and stop this... ."
>
Jupiter and Uranus eagerly leapt to their feet. "What are we waiting for?"
Uranus asked.
>They all cried out their transformation phrases simultaneously.
>"Mercury Senshi Make-up!"
>"Venus Senshi Make-up!"
>"Mars Senshi Make-up!"
>"Jupiter Senshi Make-up!"
>"Saturn Senshi Make-up!"
>"Uranus Senshi Make-up!"
>"Neptune Senshi Make-up!"
>"Pluto Senshi Make-up!"
>Their nightclothes became their fuku and their symbols turned into their tiaras.
>Uranus took charge, issuing orders. "Venus, Mercury, go down to space
dock seven and get a transport ready. Mars, alert the rest of the Palace of this attack. Neptune, Pluto, Saturn, and I will meet you all down at
the transport in five minutes. We have just enough time to get their and >stop the attack."
>The Senshi raced out to comply with Uranus' orders, except

Pluto,
Saturn, and Neptune. Usagi still sat there, and suddenly said, "I was a
>Senshi too, in the Original Time..."

>"Well, transform. You could be a big help..."

>Usagi nodded and shouted, "Moon Prism Power, Make-up!"

>She transformed into a Senshi with pink and red fuku. "I am
Sailor
Neo-Moon!" she cried.
>
Uranus, Saturn, and Neptune didn't comment on her name. Pluto tapped her
>foot. "Why did you want us to wait?"

>Uranus sighed. "Well, we four are the most powerful of the
Senshi,
right?" They nodded. "I think that we should each try to
keep a telepathic
>link with one of the other senshi in case they get in trouble."

>Neo-Moon nodded. "Yes, in the Original Time, you four were more
powerful than
the others. I think the same would hold true now."
>
Neptune chuckled. "We still don't know how powerful you are,
Usagi."
>
Saturn said softly, "Let's go then!"
>
Neo-Moon, Pluto, and Saturn started to rush off and soon were ahead, but
>Uranus grabbed Neptune's arm, holding her back. "What is it?" she asked
her friend.
>
"Michiru, I want you to keep a telepathic link with me also.
I... want
>to make sure nothing happens to you."

>Neptune looked at her sadly. "Haruka... does this have anything to do
with why you... kissed me... in the cave?"
>
Uranus lowered her eyes. "Maybe."
>
They stood in silence for a moment, before they gave each other a tight
>hug.

>Neptune smiled almost sadly, then unexpectedly stood up on her toes and
gave Uranus a long, sweet kiss on the lips. "Don't do anything foolish,
>Haruka. I don't want you to get hurt."

>Uranus blushed, her eyes wide. "I... I won't." She hugged Neptune again,
then they ran to join the others.
>

>
Place: The shuttle
>

>
The Senshi nervously waited for the transport to arrive at the platform.
>While they sat, they decided who would link with who.

>Mercury and Neptune agreed they should, since they had similar powers.
Venus would link with Pluto, and Neo-Moon also. Uranus and Jupiter would
>since they were the strongest physically. Saturn and Mars would since they
both had strong telepathic abilities.
>
The Inners nervously started talking with each other. Pluto and Saturn
>were silent. Neo-Moon muttered a few things under her breath, but that
was all she contributed. Uranus and Neptune sat holding hands, quietly
>whispering to each other.

>It was quiet for the next ten minutes, before Venus whispered, "Hotaru,
you are the most powerful of us. If... if the rest of us fall..."

>promise me you will destroy the whole platform."

>Saturn bit her lip. "I-I promise."

>

>Place: The space platform

>

>When they arrived, they quickly spread out to the areas Uranus
decided
they should go to, pairing up with their link partners.

>

>Venus, Pluto, and Neo-Moon were the first to encounter the youma.
There
was no time to heal them, so they had to destroy them.

>
"Love Arrows Strike!" Venus cried out, firing golden arrows into
the
>enemy lines.

>"Dead Scream," Pluto whispered, firing a ball of powerful
energy.

>"Moonlight Laser!" Neo-Moon shouted, shooting out a beam of
destructive light.

>The combined attack ripped through the first wave. "That was
easy,"
Venus commented, prepared to head back to the shuttle. She
turned
>around, and was face to face with several dozen youma. "Uh...
oh..."

>

>Saturn and Mars were having a tough time and were being surrounded
on all sides.
"Blazing Inferno... Engulf!" Mars shouted at the
same time Saturn shouted, "Death
>Ribbon Revolution!"

>The fiery wave and countless metal ribbons ripped through the youma,
and the two
senshi whirled around to face the rest. "Mars Flame
Sniper!" An arrow shaped flame
>launched at them.

>"Saturn Silence Shot!" Discs of energy raced at the youma.

>The attacks destroyed almost all of the rest. Mars took a hit to the
arm, Saturn
to the leg. But they continued fighting.
>
Soon, the numbers were overwhelming. "Get right behind me and
don't ask
>questions," Saturn ordered. Mars quickly complied.

>"Silence... Glaive... APPLY!!" She brought her Silence Glaive down,
but
stopped it before it could touch the platform. It was a good
thing she
>did. A huge ripple of energy demolished many surrounding buildings,
all
the youma within several thousand feet, and shook the platform
roughly.
>
They heard screams of some of the other Senshi as the ripples
passed.
>They could hear Uranus shout, "DON'T DO THAT AGAIN OR WE'LL BE
KNOCKED
INTO SPACE!!!" Saturn smirked and made a mental note to
keep that in mind.
>

>____

>

>Uranus and Jupiter were having a relatively easy time fighting.
They
barely had to use their attacks, preferring punching,
kicking, and
>jabbing.

>It seemed that nothing would go wrong, when suddenly Uranus cried

out
and dropped to her knees.

>
"What's wrong?" Jupiter asked, then she shouted in pain as a force rippled through her mind, disrupting the mental link and overwhelming
her mind.

>
Uranus fumbled for her sword. "Makoto! I can't concentrate... you try to attack..."

>Jupiter clutched her head and didn't respond. She couldn't think straight;
the pain was too much.

>
She was relieved when the pain lifted suddenly, and she turned to see that Uranus had stabbed a youma with her sword, apparently the one
that had been using the mental attack.

>
"C'mon, we gotta get rid of these things before another one tries it!"

>Uranus shouted.

>Jupiter nodded. "Lightning electrocute!" Several bolts of lightning struck
the youma, then a second wave of electricity from the antenna on her tiara shocked most of the others.

>"Heaven fury!" Uranus shouted, and a large beam of starlight finished
off the rest.

>
"Not bad for our first time, eh?" Jupiter said, wiping her brow off.

>
Uranus just grinned in agreement.

>

>_____

>

>"Aqua Possessor!" Neptune shouted, sending a wave of water to
liquify several opponents.

>
"Ice Wave Freeze!" Mercury shouted, sending a wave of ice to crush the others.

>Neptune attacked the rest with jabs and kicks while Mercury used
her attack several more times.

>
Mercury stood breathing hard and commented, "Are we really done? It didn't seem to take long at all."

>Neptune sank to the ground. "I guess so..."

>"You alright?"

>"All those people weren't really in control of their actions. It's
really unfair that they had to die."

>
"I know, but it had to be done," Mercury said.

>
They walked off towards the shuttle, where the others soon arrived. Neptune ran over to hug Uranus immediately while Neo-Moon ran around leaping into the air.
Running over excitedly, Venus hugged everyone and cheered, "We won! We won!"

>
Jupiter whooped, "We beat 'em!"

>
"Yeah!" Mercury cheered, "We were great!"

>
They all went back into the shuttle happily, and Pluto hung behind slightly,

>smiling to herself. They really are as good as they were in the Original Time,
she thought to herself, if not better.

>

>
Time: About 45 minutes later

>Place: the entrance hall, The Palace

>

>Princess Serenity rushed to hug everyone when they got back. "Oh, I

was
so worried about you all!" she cried. "But look at you! None of you
>are really hurt!"
>The Queen smiled proudly. "I am very impressed with how well you all
did. You didn't take long at all. I can see that you are more than
>qualified for your positions."
>The senshi all beamed at the compliment.
>"Why don't we all go and get some dinner? I'm sure the battle worked
up quite an appetite."
>
"Oh boy, I'm starved!" Mars said.
>
"Yeah, let's eat!" Princess Serenity agreed.
>
Everyone was chatting loudly at dinner, trying to make their

>voices heard over everyone else's. The queen also sat there, and
cringed slightly each time someone let out a loud laugh or shrill
>giggle. After several minutes of constant noise, she calmly tapped her
glass with a spoon. The princesses fell quiet and turned to look at her.
>"Sorry, but it was getting awfully loud. Care to try talking a bit
softer?"
>
"Ooooops..." Venus said.
>
Mars turned to Usagi and said, "Hey, I've been wondering, why are you
named 'Neo'-Sailor Moon?"
>"It comes from my mother's senshi name Sailor Moon--" Usagi's hands flew
to her mouth. Pluto rolled her eyes as if to say "good move".
>
The Queen raised an eyebrow. "And who is that?"
>
Usagi was silent. Pluto sighed after several moments, and chided, "Just
>TELL them."
>Usagi stuttered, "Uh, um, uh, she is... um... Princess Serenity."
>The Princess in question's eyes went wide. "Wha---?! Me?! A senshi? Your
MOTHER?!"
>
Usagi looked away. "In the Original Time, yes, but technically I don't
>exist here--"
>Serenity suddenly ran over and hugged the young woman. Surprised, Usagi
hugged her back. "Wow!" the princess exclaimed. "I can't believe this!"
>
The Queen gave a sly smile. "And who was your father?"

>
Usagi grinned. "You know him as... Endymion," she said his name in a
>sing-song voice.
>"Aaaahhh..." the princesses (except Serenity) said in unision, before
they burst out giggling.
>
"Well, they are engaged..." Uranus said between laughs.

>
"Yeah, they're involved... ha ha ha!... so it makes sense..." Mars
>chuckled.
>After several minutes, they finally calmed down and went back to
eating, before Serenity mentioned, "So, is everyone planning to go to
>that huge ball coming up?"
>Jupiter had hearts in her eyes. "Yeah! I can't wait! I haven't seen

Nephrite
in months!"
>
Mars had hearts in her eyes too. "I wanna see Jadeite!"

>
Mercury sighed. "I would go, but Kunzite... hasn't talked to me in so long."
>
"Why?" Venus asked.
>
"I don't even know! He hasn't even tried contacting me! I think he might
>be busy working on rebuilding that military base on Earth with, oh, what's
his name again?"
>
"You mean with Zoisite? Yeah, he just left and didn't really tell me
>why!" Venus shrieked.

>"Why don't you try to contact him?" Neptune asked.

>"I tried, but he never returns my messages..."

>"Neptune, who are you going with?" Mars suddenly blurted out.

>"Wha-- I haven't made any plans to go to it."

>"Neither have I," Saturn said.

>"Or me... or Pluto," Uranus said with a grin. "I guess the older senshi just
don't know how to have fun, eh?"
>
"Ugh, it would look awful if any of us went stag," Venus said.
"C'mon, at
>least try to find someone to go with!"

>"Why bother?"

>The princesses started up the loud conversation again, while the queen sighed.
"I tried..."
>
After the meal was finally finished, the exhausted princesses headed back to
>their rooms for some much needed rest.

>

>Time: several minutes later
Place: Mercury and Jupiter's room,
the Palace
>

>

>

>

>

>Jupiter lay in her bed, staring at the ceiling as she tried to get to sleep,
while Mercury persistantly was working on a writing something down. Jupiter
>rolled on her side, and tried covering her ears with a pillow, but the constant
sound of ink on paper prevented her from sleeping. After gritting her teeth,
>she grumbled, "Could you please do that later?!"

>Mercury looked over to a small, blue, handheld device resting on the desk
next to her that Pluto had called a "computer". "No, I can't..." she furiously
>moved the pen across the paper before Jupiter walked over, poked her arm, and
glared at her.
>
"I really would like to get some sleep, Ami."
>
"You will... hold on... There, I'm done," Mercury said, setting down the pen.
>
"What were you writing anyways?"
>
"A letter to the Mercurian advisory council, officially giving them ruling power."
>
"What?!"
>
Mercury held her head in her hands and sighed. "Technically, I am the ruler of
>Mercury since my parents are dead... dad was killed in battle when I

was very young,
and not long after that my mother died. I can't rule the planet from here, so they
>have to do it for me."
>"Um... I really don't know what to say... I'm shocked, to say the least. Mars said
you ruled Mercury, but I never thought you had the authority to do something like
>this."
>"I do... I hate it. I never wanted to be ruler, especially being this young. There
have been younger rulers than me on other planets though... an eighteen year old
>became king of Saturn a hundred years ago, Uranus's dad took power when he was
nineteen, and there have been others, if you want to research them."
>
"Ugh, I'd hate trying to be queen. There's _so_ many people on Jupiter!"
>
Mercury laughed slightly. "There's not many on Mercury, but it's hard to try to
>get your ideas across since long distance communication is difficult."
>Jupiter picked up Mercury's computer and looked at it. "What's this stuff on the
screen for?"
>
"Those are recent statistics of our economical state." Mercury sealed the letter
>in an envelope. "If you hit the key-- that one right there-- you'll see some
readings I took during the battle today."
>
Jupiter hit the key and looked at the words on the screen. "What does this stuff
>mean?"
>"It's a readout of power levels, how powerful some people's attacks were, some
other facts... I need to show Serenity it though. I found out some interesting
>information about everyone's abilities." Mercury took back her computer and
turned it off.
>
"Oh really? What about mine?"
>
"It seems that you have an affinity for trees."
>
"Eh?"
>
"Trees can talk with you."
>
Jupiter lay back down on her bed as Mercury lay down on hers.
"That's weird... I
>never would have known that."
>"It's odd to know, isn't it? I found out some other things... *YAWN* I'll tell you
later."
>
"Sleepy?"
>
"Yes... I'm going to sleep. Goodnight."
>
"Goodnight."
>
Jupiter fell asleep long after that, while Mercury remained awake. "Why?" Mercury
>whispered softly. "Why did you have to die, mother? Why did you have to take your
own life?"
>
>
Time: around the same
>Place: Uranus and Neptune's room
>
>Uranus stared into the flames of the candles sitting on the nightstand next
to her bed. It was strange, trying to adjust to living here. It had been a few
>months since the senshi had been called here, but it had felt like longer. It
was almost enough to make her forget home...
>
She sighed and looked over at the bed next to her where Neptune

was trying to
>get to sleep. She smiled a bit wistfully. Neptune had been the first friend she'd ever had. Until she came to the moon, she'd been alone, with no one to talk to,
>no one who would understand her. She sighed softly. If only she had the courage...

>Neptune rolled over and looked over at her. "Something wrong, Haruka?" she asked.

>Uranus blinked in surprise. "N-nothing. Sorry, I... can't get to sleep..." she
finished lamely. Damnit, she was supposed to be the strongest senshi, but
>when it came to being around people, saying what she felt, she felt stupid.

>"I can't get to sleep either. I keep getting these weird premonitions. I don't
>
know what they are."
>
"What do you see?"
>
Neptune tucked her knees under her chin. "I see... people, fighting, a strange
>woman... it's hard to put it into words..."

>"Why not try that mirror of yours? Maybe you'd get a better picture with it."

>Neptune laughed.

>"What?"

>She pulled out her mirror. "Sorry... that's a good idea... I can't believe I
didn't think of it... Guess I just have my mind on other things."
>
"Like what?"
>
Neptune was silent and just gazed into the mirror. "This is the image... come
>see."

>Uranus walked over to her bed and looked into the mirror Neptune held. "That's
odd... it doesn't make sense."
>
"I don't understand what it means either," Neptune said. "I think it might be
>important, but I can't figure out what the images mean. It's so frustrating! If
I could figure it out--"
>
Uranus took the mirror from her and placed it on the nightstand.
"Stop worrying
>about it, you'll figure it out eventually. Nothing to lose sleep over."

>"I suppose."

>They were silent several moments, then Neptune asked, "Haruka, what was it like
growing up on Uranus? I heard that it's very different from Neptune."
>
Uranus sat still, slightly shocked. "D-Do you mean, what Uranus is like, or what
>my life was like?"

>"Both."

>Uranus felt like there was a noose around her neck. Could she tell her, could she
really tell anyone about it? "Umm... Uranus is alright, I suppose... weather's
>alright, everyone's got a pretty nice amount of money... the schools are supposedly
good too. The people are a bit ignorant though."

>
"Supposedly good? Didn't you go to school?"
>
Uranus was quiet a bit. "No. I grew up in the palace."

>
"Did you like living there?"
>
"No! Um... no, I hated it."

>
"Nobody to talk to, huh? Just your parents? That would get old.
I heard you had a

>brother... what happened to him?"

>Uranus had that same feeling again. "He... He ran away."

>"Why did he do that? Weren't your parents nice to him?"

>Neptune sat and waited, but Uranus was completely quiet. "Haruka?
What's wrong?
Is it about your parents?" She frowned. "What is
it?"

>
Uranus turned away. "I can't... I can't..." She lowered her
head. "Michiru, you

>have to promise me... you won't tell anyone. I don't care who they
are."

>"I promise."

>Uranus turned away from her and shuddered slightly, then unfastened
the clasps
on her dress and pulled the top down around her waist
to bare her back.

>
Neptune gasped in shock. "W-What the-- where did you get all
those scars?!"

>
Uranus pulled her dress up, fastened it, and turned to face her
again. "My father."

>
Neptune sat in shock. "He... he did that to you? Oh god..."

>
Uranus fought back tears. "Why do you think I was so happy to
come here?

>To get away from..." she wiped her eyes off and fell silent.

>Neptune slowly came forward and hugged her. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't
have
asked you to tell..."

>
"I-It's alright... I-I needed to t-tell... someone..." Uranus
stopped trying

>to hold back her tears and cried on Neptune's shoulder. "It's not
fair! It's
not fair! My brother was able to get away, b-but I had
to stay... so many

>years... my mother didn't do anything... she was too busy
drinking... it's
so unfair! I never had anyone... no one cared..."

>
Neptune stroked her short hair back. "I know it isn't fair,
Haruka, but you're

>safe now... no one's going to hurt you..." She gently kissed her
forehead. "You
have people here who care for you deeply, never
forget that. You will never be

>alone again."

>"Y-You mean that?" Uranus sniffled and wiped her eyes again.

"Y-You'll be here
for me, right?"

>
"Of course I will," she whispered softly. "Haruka..." she paused
before raising

>her voice slightly. "I love you. Never forget that."

>Uranus looked up at her with surprised eyes. "You... you do?" she
lowered
her head to hide the slight blush on her cheeks.

"Michiru... I... I love

>you too."

>Neptune smiled softly at her. "That wasn't so hard, was it?"

>Uranus managed a weak smile. "Not really..." She laughed slightly.
"Well...
I guess we both know why we kissed each other then..."

>
Neptune laughed. "I guess so! Why don't we try to get some sleep
now? You've

>made enough confessions today."

>Uranus stood up to walk back to her bed, then turned around with a quizzical
look on her face. "Michiru... you just admitted your feelings for me... and
>now you want me to go to sleep?"
>Neptune blushed. "We can worry about it later..."
>"You're just nervous," Uranus teased.
>"I am not," Neptune retorted. "I'm just sleepy."
>Uranus came over and knelt next to her bed. "Goodnight," she whispered.
>
"Sleep well."
>
"You too," Neptune whispered back.
>
Uranus leaned forward slightly, paused, then slowly moved forward and gently
>kissed Neptune's lips. Neptune returned the kiss, running her fingers through
the other girl's short hair as their mouths pressed together. After several
>seconds Uranus pulled away and stood up. "Hope you have sweet dreams."
>Neptune looked up at her and smiled. "Oh, I definitely will."
>
>Uranus blew out the candles and started to lie down.
>
>"Haruka?"
>"Yeah?"
>"Ummm... oh, nothing."
>"Well, why don't you just tell me anyways and I'll decide if it's 'nothing'?"
>There was a pause.
>"Don't take this the wrong way... but I think I'd sleep better... in your
arms..."
>
For a few moments, neither said a thing, then Uranus came over and lay down
>next to her. They wrapped their arms around each other, and Neptune smiled
slightly. "That's much better," she said softly as she drifted off to sleep.
>

> _____
>
 FIVE
>

>

>
Time: the next morning
>Place: a breakfast hall, the Palace
>

>Queen Serenity woke up with a start after a frighteningly realistic
nightmare.
>She sat trying to calm herself down and realized that the nightmare was a
>premonition. "I have to wake up the Senshi..." she mumbled. She threw her
clothes on and ran to the hall where the senshi's quarters were. She knocked
>on the room her daughter shared with Usagi.
>"Uhn... who is it?" came a sleepy call.
>"Your mother," she said as she pushed open the unlocked door.
>
>She couldn't help but laugh at the sight. Both her daughter and her
grandchild were lying in their beds in pretty much the same position. Like mother like
>daughter, she thought to herself. "Get up," she told them. "Go to the
breakfast hall. I need all the senshi there."
>
She went to Mercury and Jupiter's next. Upon opening the door,
she was surprised
>to see the two already awake and dressed, sitting and talking. "Oh,

Queen Serenity,
hello," Mercury said. "Do you need something?"

>
"Yes, go down to the breakfast hall. I'll be their shortly."

>
The two women looked a bit confused but obeyed.

>
Queen Serenity, while walking to Mars and Venus's room, suddenly wondered why no

>one bothered to lock their door anymore. Shrugging, she walked in. It took a few
minutes to wake them both up, but she finally got them going. They didn't look

>too happy about being woken up though.

>Saturn and Pluto were also already awake when she arrived, and seemed a bit curious
as to just why they had to go, but didn't ask questions and went downstairs

>immediately.

>The queen was quite a bit shocked when she walked into Uranus and Neptune's room
and found them cuddled in the same bed. She shook them awake. "Oh! Serenity, um,

>hi..." Neptune blushed deeply when she saw her there.

>"Just... go down to the breakfast hall as soon as you get dressed," she told
them before walking out. That was a surprise she wasn't expecting.

>
After everyone had gathered, she told them about the premonition of the

>Dark Kingdom massing on Uranus to prepare for an assault. She told them
the senshi would most certainly be needed. When Venus questioned her, Mars,

>Saturn, and Neptune all mentioned having premonitions of fighting, which
confirmed the queen's decision.

>
"Mother, if the Dark Kingdom is there, how can just the nine of them stand

>up to them?" Princess Serenity asked.

>"Hey, we can handle it!" Jupiter scoffed.

>"Just in case, we should have extra support," Mercury commented. "Maybe if
we could get the Uranian army to work alongside us... ? Uranus, do you think

>they would?"

>
She shrugged. "Dunno. You could try. You'll have to talk with General Toren and

>see if he's willing to."

>"Well, if there are no further questions, transform," the queen said.

>The senshi nodded and did so.

>"I still don't think it's enough..." Princess Serenity said softly.
"Mother? I want to help them, but what can I do?"

>
"There's not much you can do..."

>
Pluto interrupts, "In the Original Time, Serenity was Sailor Moon. She

>was a powerful Senshi and she was a good ally. Serenity should still
have that power. I think that if you give her the ginzuishou she can

>regain that power."

>Queen Serenity was doubtful. "Pluto, I trust in your wisdom, but you must be
mistaken. These ARE all the Senshi. There are no more."

>
Pluto's crimson eyes narrowed. "Give her the ginzuishou."

>
Queen Serenity sighed and handed the ginzuishou to her daughter.

>
Princess Serenity stood with it and watched in shock as she was enveloped in
>a beam of light. A sailor fuku formed on her. Her collar and choker were baby
blue, the bow on her chest carnation pink. She had three layers of skirt, the
>top baby blue, the next lavender, and the one underneath carnation pink. Her
sleeves were petal shaped like Saturn's were. The bow in the back was silvery
>with long tails. The piping on her gloves was carnation pink. She had thin ribbons
of baby blue, lavender, and carnation pink lining the top of her skirt instead of
>piping like the other senshi. The ginzuishou lay in the center of her bow, with
a thin band of silver around it. Her tiara was thin and silvery. Pink discs were
>attached to her odango and she had pearl decorations in her hair. Her high-heeled
boots were pale-blue and laced-up. She had a silver crescent moon on her choker,
>and dangling silver crescents for earrings.

>All but Pluto and Neo-Moon stared at her in disbelief. "Technically, this form is
called 'Sailor Silver Moon', " Pluto commented.

>
"Nice fuku," Mars commented.
>
Silver Moon teased, "Much cooler than yours, isn't it?"

>
Mars fumed at her. "Serenity!"
>
"Silver Moon, you are the leader of the Senshi," Pluto told her. The Senshi
>seemed a bit surprised-- Serenity, their leader? Pluto continued, "It is your
duty and your responsibility to lead us into battle. Do you fully accept the
>responsibility, as well as the risk that follows?"

>"I-I accept," Serenity said in a wavering voice.

>She was about to ask Pluto what to do next when Saturn let out a terrified
shriek. She almost collapsed, but Jupiter caught her before she hit the
>floor. "Powerful... presence..." the small girl whispered, "from another
galaxy... far... great evil... great danger..." she coughed hard and closed
>her eyes tight.

>"Senshi!" Silver Moon shouted to them. They all snapped to attention, surprised.
"Here's the plan... we head to the transport the MOMENT I finish telling you
>this. We are going straight to Uranus. We don't have time to worry about
alerting anyone, so Mother, swear to me that you will do this for us. We fight
>when we get there. I don't expect anyone to do anymore than they have to, I
don't expect anyone to push themselves to the limit, but damn it, people are
>counting on us so you give it what you can without killing yourself! I don't
want to lose anyone! We all go and we all come back, you hear! We're going
>to WIN too! So let's win this war, people! The whole system is counting on us!
Let's move!"
>
We can win, I know we will, Silver Moon thought to herself as they raced for the
>transport.

>Queen Serenity sadly watched them go. A black-clothed figure joined her. "So,
they're off to battle?"
>
Serenity turned in surprised. "What the-- oh. It's you."

>
"Yes, it's me."
>
Serenity turned away again. "What are you doing here?"

>
"Things are changing. I decided to visit."
>
"You should be here... don't you have students to attend to?"

>
"They can manage without me. They've gone hundreds of years
without me before.
>I'm sure several minutes won't matter."

>"And that brown-haired lady that's usually with you?"

>
"I don't trust her anymore."
>
"Oh."
>
The two stood in silence for a moment. "Whatever happened to
that Oriental woman?"
>
"Who? I don't know who you mean."
>
"Has that memory wipe spell kicked in again? I can't believe you
would have forgotten
>_her_. "

>"Hmm... I suppose it has. Now that I think about it, I can't
remember the last few
years all that well." The figure turned and
started to walk away, then stopped. "You
>do realize that your senshi will face a very dangerous foe on
Uranus?"

>"Yes, I do."

>"Pray that they win."

>With that, she disappeared.

>

>Time: about ten minutes later
Place: the shuttle
>

>
The Senshi sat gathered around a large piece of paper where
Uranus was
>furiously sketching a map of the Palace on her home planet. She
made
scant conversation as she talked, but would occasionally
comment
>something like, "I don't think my father would have changed
anything
since I was last there; he likes things to stay the
same.", "The troops
>will be easier to convince that Beryl is the enemy than it will
to
convince my father.", and "We have to make sure that we avoid
direct
>confrontation with the Dark Kingdom until it is necessary." Pluto
stood
behind the others as everyone squeezed in trying to get a
good view,
>Saturn and Neo-Moon sitting on the ground with Neptune kneeling next
to
Uranus.
>
Uranus finally finished the map and handed it to Silver Moon.
She glanced over
>it. "Thanks, this is really thorough... hmm... Uranus, I just
thought of
something. Is it possible that..." she coughed
slightly. "Well, maybe your
>father is _letting_ the Dark Kingdom come here, if he accepted a
bribe...
do you think he'd do something like that?"
>
"Yes," Uranus answered firmly. "Without a doubt."

>
"Somebody's going to need to try and reason with him then. I
think you should
>do it."

>Uranus froze. "You can't expect me to do that!"

>"Why not? I'm the leader, and the lives of everyone in this galaxy

is more
important to me than your own personal agenda. Unless you have a really good
>reason not to, you're going to do it."
>Uranus hung her head. "Neptune, please go with me," she said softly.
>Neptune nodded to her.
>"The rest of us will try to get the Uranian army on our side and, if necessary,
take care of any Dark Kingdom troops."
>
Neo-Moon curled up on the cushioned bench and tried to rest up for the battle, but she found that she was too nervous. What was it that Saturn
had sensed? Silver Moon was next to her, thinking of Endymion, worried about what might happen to her daughter in the battle ahead. Pluto was quietly discussing the vision with Saturn. She was careful not to reveal anything that might lead her to learn what happened to the Original Time, but she couldn't help but worry. Could it be Mistress Nine? Venus, Jupiter, and Mercury all sat talking with each other, trying to calm each other's nerves. Neptune and Uranus sat to the side, holding hands, whispering softly to each other.
>Saturn and Mars both got a startling realization at the same time.
Without explaining what was going on, Mars cried, "Mars Flame Sniper!"
>and Saturn shouted, "Saturn Silence Shot!"
>The fire arrow and the flat, circular purple disc rammed into an
apparently invisible object. The moment they struck, the man standing there became visible. "Kunzite!" Mercury cried.
>Kunzite sneered, "Took you people long enough to find me. I've spied on you
many times these past several months. I know all your plans... there's nothing you can do to stop us."
>"Correction," Uranus said calmly, unsheathing her sword. "There's a lot
we can do!" She leapt at him in one fluid motion and cried, "Space Sword
>Blaster!"
>The attack ripped through Kunzite, causing him to weaken. "I didn't
think... the Senshi had so much strength in them..." he said as he dropped to his knees and spat out blood.
>Uranus narrowed her eyes and raised her sword to slice through him.
Neptune grabbed her arm and pulled her back. "We can get information from him!" she hissed.
>Uranus nodded and sheathed her sword, but struck Kunzite on the side of
the head with the hilt, knocking him unconscious. "Mars, enter his mind."
>Mars nodded and pressed her hands to either side of his face. She closed
her eyes in concentration and reeled as the swarm of images came to her.
>"He and the other four Generals were corrupted and brainwashed. They
have more abilities now, as he demonstrated, and they are loyal to
>Beryl."
>"So what is their plan?" Silver Moon asked her.
>Mars explained carefully what Beryl's plans of attack were. The

other Senshi
visibly paled. "I see," Silver Moon whispered. "Well, there's no way we >are going to let that happen! Let's put a stop to this!"

>"Right!" they all responded.

>"We'll send the Dark Kingdom to Hell and back if we have to in order to
teach them not to mess with the Sailor Senshi! They are going to pay for

>attacking us!"

>
Time: two hours later
Place: Uranus

>

>
The rest of the trip was fairly uneventful, except for the fact that

>upon awakening, Kunzite teleported away.

>The Senshi split up and quickly moved to their posts. Silver Moon,
Jupiter, and Mars quickly went to where the troops supposedly resided,

>Uranus and Neptune headed for the Throne Room, and Pluto led the rest
to circle the Palace. According to Kunzite's information, about half

>and hour from now is when the Dark Kingdom would strike.

>Silver Moon got lucky and ran into the General of the Uranian Army. She
recognized him from meetings at the Palace he'd attended.

"General

>Toren!" she exclaimed.

>"Eh?" The man didn't recognize her at all. "Who are you? A new Sailor
Senshi?"

>
"It's me... Princess Serenity. Sailor Silver Moon. Look, I need to talk

>with your troops. Beryl plans to buy out the army from the King and turn
them into Dark Kingdom slaves."

>
"That's crazy! Our king would never do that!"

>
Jupiter cut in rudely, "Obviously you don't know him as well as his

>daughter does."

>Toren paled. "The Princess is _here_? She came _back_?!"

>"Just for the battle," Mars assured him.

>Toren let out a sigh of relief. The Senshi glanced at each other and
shrugged. "Look, can we talk with your troops?" Silver Moon asked.

>
Toren thought for a moment. "Give me five minutes to round them up.

>They'll listen to you, I guarantee it."

>Mars nodded as he led the way.

>

>

>
Pluto, Saturn, Venus, Mercury, and Neo-Moon were all circling the

>Palace, separate from each other, but wary of the danger. If one of them
got a surprise attack, who knew if they could send out a telepathic

>warning quickly enough?

>Mercury carefully scanned the starry skies with her minicomputer. On
this planet, the sky was always black and starry, making it nearly

>impossible for them to know what time of day it was. Neo-Moon searched
with her eyes only. Pluto was carefully allowing her mind

to access the

>information her abilities provided. Venus used her Love senses to search
for a lack of it. After all, the only feeling the Dark Kingdom seemed to

>feel was hatred. Saturn was allowing her mental powers to do the searching, hovering slightly over the ground.

>
About five minutes later, Mercury's computer picked up the attackers. She

>alerted everyone to join her.

>At that moment, Silver Moon finished her talk, and the troops were just
in time to see the threat and help out.

>
Uranus and Neptune had finally tracked down the King and barely noticed

>the warning.

>"Silence Glaive Apply!" The silent attack was able to knock several
troops out of the way.

>
This section of the Dark Kingdom's army, led by Zoisite himself, was

>skilled in battle. They carefully avoided the attacks launched at them
and responded with their own. The Uranian Army possessed very skilled

>fighting prowess as well, but lacked any special magical talents.

>Pluto was the first to notice this setback. "Time Threads Encircle!" she
shouted. A large section of this part of the Army found themselves

>entangled in the millions of black threads and disappeared from the
timeline. Pluto ignored the fact that this was against her duties as the

>Keeper of Time to remove anyone from the timestream.

>"Ginzuishou Cleansing!" Silver Moon shouted. A burst of white light was
able to heal some of the Dark Kingdom's troops and restore them, but Silver

>Moon promptly sank to her knees.

>Mars ran over to protect her. "Blazing Inferno Engulf!" she shouted, and
a large wave of fire appeared around the army, burning many.

>
Zoisite was seething with rage. He lifted a long black sword up and

>shouted, "Powers of darkness, charge this sword with energy!" The sword
was glowing a black color now as he lifted it over his head and leapt at

>Neo-Moon.

>Neo-Moon was barely able to shout, "Moonlight Laser!" before Zoisite was
too close, and as it was the sword clipped her arm and charged her body

>with dark energy.

>Saturn quickly rushed to her side and thrust her glaive point neatly
through Zoisite's body.

>
Suddenly, everything seemed to stop and hush. Zoisite trembled and slid

>off the glaive, landing on the ground at Saturn's feet. Saturn's face
was cold and devoid of emotion as she gazed down at the shuddering form

>at her feet. "How... could... you..." Zoisite rasped, coughing blood.

>"I am the Silent Messiah, Sailor Saturn. I will defend the life of my
comrades at all cost. You, pitiful man, made a mistake in attacking

>Princess Serenity's heiress."
>Zoisite shuddered one last time and died.
>Venus watched on with eyes wide with horror. She mouthed "no", tears welling
up in her eyes, but didn't have time to cry.

>
Seemingly out of nowhere, Kunzite appeared again, Nephrite and Jadeite at his side. They all unleashed their own attacks at the present Senshi.
>

>
Uranus finally found her father seated at a dinner table, feet dangling over one side of the large chair he sat in. She shivered slightly, afraid
to approach, then Neptune sent a telepathic message to her. "Don't be afraid, >he can't hurt you. I won't let him. Let's get this over with, alright?"
>Uranus nodded slightly and the two walked into the throne room. The King,
startled, quickly sat up. "What are YOU doing here?!" he demanded.

>
"Stopping you from making a mistake," Uranus said coolly, trying to control the wavering in her voice.
>"The only mistake I've ever made was not killing you before you could grow
up enough to run off," he sneered.

>
"She's talking about Beryl," Neptune snapped.

>
"Touchy, aren't you?" he said sarcastically. "What're you, her plaything?"

>Besides, Beryl and I have finished the deal already. In exchange for a
healthy sum of money, she gets to keep troops here."

>
Uranus clenched her fists. "Why did you ever agree to do that_?! You're dooming our people by letting that demon stay here!"
>"Maybe I am, maybe I am not. They're my subjects to do what I want with.
I'm the king. I control all their lives." He stood up and glared at her.

>"And I still control yours."
>Uranus took an involuntary step back. Neptune placed a hand on her shoulder
to steady her. "Don't listen to him," she warned. "He's just trying to bait you."
>"Do you still have the scars?" he taunted. "I hope so. I'm looking to add
a few more. You're a very disobedient child. I might just have to take out

>my gun again." He reached into his robes and pulled out a pistol.
>Uranus started shaking. "Leave me alone!" she whispered.
>He laughed as he lifted it and tightened his finger around the trigger.
>Uranus dashed forward and slapped the gun from his hands before he could
use it. His foot connected with her ribs a moment later. She gasped and clutched her stomach, sinking to her knees. He raised his hand to strike
her.

>
Neptune was quicker though. She grabbed him and surprised even herself with her strength as she threw him onto the table. She helped the shuddering Uranus
to her feet in time to here a chilled voice

say, "Did I miss anything?"
>
Neptune and Uranus whirled around to see a crimson-haired woman in a purple dress standing there. Beryl. Without thinking, Uranus quickly
unsheathed her sword and leapt at her. "Wait, DON'T!" Neptune shrieked.
>
Beryl's hastily thrown up forcefield threw Uranus back, and the navy-clad Senshi skidded across the floor from the impact.

>"Aqua Possessor!"
>The attack that should have liquefied Beryl was repelled, and Neptune
had to throw herself onto the ground to avoid her own attack. She sent out to the other senshi. "Uranus and I are fighting Beryl here! We need help!"
>"There's no time!" someone responded. "We have our hands full with three
of the Generals here!" The signal was cut off.

>
Neptune was relieved when Saturn showed up though. "The other Senshi
>didn't want me to leave, but you need help," was her reason.

>A second figure emerged from the shadows. Her long black hair cascaded
over the floor, her purple eyes narrowed, the pearl-lined navy top worn
>with a long white skirt seeming to flow from her, the black star on her
forehead glowing faintly. "Who are YOU?" Uranus gasped.

>
The woman gave a light laugh. "I am known as Mistress Nine, from Tau Ceti." Without further explanation, her hair shot out and wrapped around
Uranus' neck. Uranus gasped and tried to pull away as the hair wrapped tighter.
>"Harukaaaaa!" Neptune screamed, running at the woman.
>Saturn remained frozen as her eyes locked with Mistress Nine's. Neptune
stopped in her tracks as she noticed their gaze and Uranus gave a sigh
>of relief as the hair unwound from her neck. "Y-you! It's you!" Saturn
whispered, stepping back.
>
Mistress Nine's eyes flickered with a seeming recognition. "Ah! Hotaru,
>my puppet!" Her hair raced at the small woman, wrapping her arms and
legs. "Come to me... I need your abilities..."
>"No!!" Saturn cried.
>
Taking advantage of the distraction, Beryl slipped behind Uranus and Neptune and started to draw out their energy.
>"Stop right there!" a voice shouted loudly.
>Seven figures clad in Sailor fuku immediately appeared. In the center,
clad in pastel and silver tones, was Sailor Silver Moon. "Agent of love
>and justice, I am the beautiful sailor suited soldier... Sailor Silver
Moon! In the name of the Moon, I will punish you!"

>
Before either of the evil women could respond, Jupiter shouted,
>"Lightning Electrocute!"
>Beryl was hit by the attack, but she quickly recovered to fire a

blast
of red light at Jupiter. Silver Moon shoved Jupiter away and took the
>hit.
>"Love Arrows Strike!" Venus launched her arrows at Mistress Nine,
forcing her to release her hold on Saturn momentarily, giving her enough
>time to strike.
>"Death... Ribbon... Revolution!" Sharp, metallic ribbons appeared and
shot at Mistress Nine, but before they hit, she repelled them.

>
The Senshi quickly combined attacks at the two women. "Ice Wave Freeze!"
>
"Love Arrows Strike!"
>
"Flaming Inferno Engulf!"
>
"Moonlight Laser!"
>
"Ginzuishou Cleansing!"
>
"Lightning Electrocute!"
>
"Silent Scream!" [note: this is Saturn's attack; not the same as Pluto's
>dead scream]
>"Heaven Fury!"
>"Aqua Possessor!"
>"Time Threads Encircle!"
>An enormous explosion occurred as the attacks combined, rocking the
Palace and collapsing the ceiling. The Senshi were thrown to the floor
>with the force. After the dust settled, Beryl's form was visible under
a pile of rock, a huge pool of blood around her, the King of Uranus was
>also bleeding, obviously dead... but Mistress Nine...
>Her form rose from the dust, her dress torn and her eyes burning red.
"You DARE to attack ME?!" Her hair billowed around her as she raised her
>arms over her head, and a huge black electric ball coalesced with white
lightning over her head. "I shall kill you all!"
>
The attack rushed at them. In a last-ditch effort, Saturn shouted,
>"Silence Block!" just as Pluto shouted the forbidden, "Time Stop!"
>The ball of energy froze. The world froze. The people standing in the
Throne Room, however, were still able to move. "What is this!?" Mistress Nine gasped, her shock clearly apparent. She paled in fright.
>"You
cannot be... no! This is not possible!"
>
Pluto stood slightly apart from the other Senshi, her eyes narrow
>crimson slits. "I am Sailor Pluto, the Guardian of Time, and believe me,
it IS possible."
>
She lifted the Time Key. "This is a timeline caused due to a time fracture... Saturn caused it, but YOU are the direct reason. And now you
have the gall to interfere with our lives again." The Garnet Orb glowed
>a bright magenta, and the Talismans of Uranus and Neptune appeared. A
triangle of light formed, and the Holy Grail was formed. It floated
>above her hand, as Sailor Pluto sneered, "Well, Mistress Nine, there is
no more reason for me to allow you to exist."
>
The grail hovered over to Silver Moon. "Take it," Pluto said coolly,

>gesturing to the other woman.
>Silver Moon grasped it in her hands.
>"And now," Pluto said simply, "I think it is time that Mistress Nine
leaves this universe FOREVER."
>
"Puu--wait!" Neo-Moon cried. "You can't just destroy her!"

>
Mistress Nine cackled, "Yes... listen to the child... there is something to her words!"
>The Inner Senshi held their ground with determined looks on their faces, the two Moons trying to decide what to do, and the other Outer Senshi were trying to decide if they should let Pluto continue with this.

>
Mistress Nine was about to strike again when she was knocked away by Uranus. Her eyes flashed red, and as she moved to strike Uranus, Silver Moon launched an attack at her. A bright burst of silver light knocked the woman off her target, giving Uranus time to scramble away.

>Mistress Nine shrieked as the beam stuck her. She swiped her arm out, her nails extended as claws, and struck Silver Moon's cheek, making a deep gash. The Moon Princess cried out and clamped her palm to her bleeding wound, knocked to the ground by the momentum of the swipe.

>
"Mars Flame--"
>
"JUPITER OAK--"
>
Mistress Nine recognized the voices, and with a snarl, sent discs of energy towards Mars and Jupiter. The two held their screams in, managing to keep their footing under the blast. Pluto had an angry look on her face, the likes of which Neo-Moon had never seen cross the immortal woman's face. Pluto's Garnet Orb burst into light, and she screamed,

>"TIME THREADS ENCIRCLE!!!"
>Millions of tiny black threads rushed at Mistress Nine, designed to remove the object they surrounded from existence.

>
Which is why Pluto was very shocked to see Mercury hurl the body of Uranus's father into the threads. Instead of removing their intended target, the corpse was removed instead. Pluto quickly recovered from the shock, and was about to call upon her powers again, when Venus hurled her body against the older woman, knocking her to the ground. The heart shaped object with the Garnet Orb upon it was jostled from the Time Staff, and time resumed.

>
Beryl moaned from underneath the rubble, alive despite her injuries.

>Mistress Nine cast her a furious glance at her weakness in battle. Beryl's form slowly rose, her crown having been knocked from her forehead and her dress torn. With her glowing eyes and slightly wild auburn hair, it was obvious she was planning to make up for her previous downfall.

>Mistress Nine whipped around to face the Senshi again, hands

glowing.
Beryl had her claws ready. "It was fun to play around,"
Mistress Nine
>taunted, "but the real battle begins now!"

>She called several dozen daimons to aid her. As they approached, the

Senshi took no notice, being too busy dueling with the evil
women.
>Saturn sensed them coming but didn't have time to warn the others...

except... "Mercury! Don't ask questions, just step aside and scan
the sky
>with your visor!"

>Mercury immediately obeyed. To her dismay, quite a lot of daimons
were
detected. But maybe... these seemed to be based upon
computers. She
>quickly glanced to her fellows as she furiously typed in the code
for a
virus into her computer, directing it at the daimons. She
hid it as a
>simple Camish program [a Silver Millennium game similar to
Solitaire].
They never knew the difference and simply absorbed
it. Mercury smiled
>and continued to battle.

>Just when the daimons burst in, the virus took effect. Their bodies

twisted and soon were infected beyond repair. They disappeared
with a
>final scream of, "Lovely!" Saturn shouted to Mercury that she did a
good
job.
>
Neptune called Mercury over to help her and Uranus fight Beryl.
Beryl
>was swiping with her claws at the two, releasing bursts of deadly
energy
every now and then. Uranus was able to hold her claws off
with her Space
>Sword, but the energy bursts were fast weakening her. Mercury cried,

"Ice Wave FREEZE!" at the same time that Neptune screamed, "AQUA

>POSSESSOR!!! "

>Due to the nature of Neptune's attack, one which absorbed the target
and
thus liquefying it, combined with the wave of ice, formed a
formidable
>attack that would paralyze Beryl before she could negate the
effects. As
it rushed at her, Mistress Nine planted herself in
front of it with a
>chuckle. The ice soaked into her body, but strangely, to no effect.
As
Neptune's attack spread through her, she seemed to absorb it
instead of
>the other way around.

>The two Senshi were startled by this, and were about to
counterattack
when Uranus cried her attack, "Heaven Fury!" The
beam struck Mistress
>Nine, and since her body was now absorbing anything thrown at it,
the
beam was soaked in. Mistress Nine trembled slightly as the
pure energy
>mixed with the dark energy within her, but she soon recovered.

>Silver Moon pulled out her ginzuishou and released her own beam at

Beryl. The evil queen screamed in pain and moved to strike back.
Silver
>Moon reached out and grasped the Holy Grail tightly.

>Suddenly, it was still. The combatants stopped their fighting. As
Silver
Moon held the Holy Grail tightly, Mistress Nine bit her
lip and glanced

>around. Unlike the other people reincarnated into this galaxy, she knew
about the previous time. This Grail had enabled Super Sailor Moon to

>destroy her master, the entity known as Master Pharaoh Ninety. Mistress Nine was not stupid; this thing was powerful! She coolly narrowed her eyes.

>"Well, you have it, what will you do with it?"
>"I will not destroy you," Silver Moon whispered through pale, cold lips. She was terribly afraid though. She didn't want to destroy this invader,

>but Pluto... should she listen to her?

>Mistress Nine gave a crooked, bitter smile. "Pity, I wouldn't think twice about harming you! Here, let me share what I can do!"

>
Mistress Nine invaded their minds then, drawing out their most emotionally painful memories. As she did so, their fuku dissolved, leaving them clad in strange ribbons of their aura color that seemed to billow around them but cover them at the same time. Their symbols burst into light on their foreheads as they screamed in unison.

>
Mistress Nine smirked as the Senshi lay on the ground, ribbons flailing

>around them, as they cried with the agony of their previous experiences.
"An ingenious plan," Beryl commented to her. "Leave them unable to think

>straight, and kill them whenever you feel ready."

>"As soon as this is finished, Saturn will be mine to possess," she murmured.

>Beryl shrugged at watched the Senshi writhe.

>Suddenly, for a brief moment, it seemed that Mistress Nine wavered.

Their minds slowly awakened again.

>
They stood up, the ribbons that clad them billowing around them as they lifted their weapons.

>"P-P-Perhaps you made a mistake," Beryl stuttered. Mistress Nine glared at her and fired several sharp ribbons (similar to Saturn's) at Beryl.

>The ribbons tore through her painfully, and as Beryl gasped and dizzily fought the pain, she slipped to the ground on all fours, coughing hard.

>Her vision dimmed. "N-no! You can't do this!" she gasped, wiping blood from her mouth. She spit out some blood and moaned, weakly falling

>against the floor in a pool of her own blood.

>Mistress Nine pulled her head up by the hair. "I don't appreciate being talked back to, Beryl. Apologize and I'll consider healing you."

>
Beryl moaned and summoned her remaining Generals. Jadeite and Kunzite

>appeared with smirks on their faces, Nephrite with an unsure expression.

>Mistress Nine didn't pay any attention to them and sharply kicked Beryl in the side. "I take it back!" she cried. "I'm sorry, Mistress--" she shuddered slightly.

>Mistress Nine healed the woman, but Beryl remained dazed. "So, Sailor Senshi," the woman from Tau Ceti said, coolly watching the Senshi. "Do

>you really think you can defeat me?"
>Pluto narrowed her eyes. "We have more than enough power, Mistress

Nine." She gave the Senshi a slight gesture.
>
Serenity paled slightly, but nodded. She lifted the ginzuishou high.
>"Silver Moon Power!" A burst of silver light coalesced with a streak of

pink in front of her.
>
At the exact same time, Neo-Moon lifted her own ginzuishou high.
"Neo
>Moon Power!" A burst of pink light with a streak of silver merged with

the silver one.
>
The Senshi went in to action simultaneously, all the motions being done
>and the words spoken at the same time. Mercury lifted her Aqua Harp

above her head. "Mercury Ice Power!" A burst of soft blue light merged
with the others, forming a ball of light.
>Venus lifted her Love Chain up. "Venus Love Power!" A beam of gold light

merged with the ball.
>
Mars lifted her Flame Bow in one hand. "Mars Fire Power!" A beam of
bright red light merged with the ball.
>Jupiter lifted her lightning bolt triumphantly. "Jupiter Storm Power!" A

beam of rich green light merged with the ball.

>
Saturn slowly lifted her Silence Glaive. "Saturn Silence Power!"
A beam of royal purple light merged with the ball.
>Uranus raised her Space Sword high. "Uranus Heavens Power!" A beam of

indigo light merged with the ball.
>
Neptune held her Aqua Mirror over her head. "Neptune Ocean Power!" A
beam of turquoise light merged with the ball.
>Pluto simply held the Time Staff at arms length and whispered, "Pluto

Time Power." A beam of nearly black light merged with the ball.
>
"What the--"
>
Mistress Nine didn't have time to speak as the ball slammed into her.
>She gave a shriek as her body seemed to stretch and rip apart into

nothingness. A burst of dark light appeared; the essence of her.

>
Serenity lifted the Holy Grail and shouted an unintelligible phrase. The
dark form was sucked in and destroyed. Serenity then collapsed, Jupiter

catching her before she hit the floor. The Senshi's stares moved to
Beryl now, but Beryl had seen what happened to Mistress Nine and she

teleported away.
>
The Outer Senshi were about to direct it for the three Generals when
Jupiter shouted, "STOP!!!!" Everyone turned to stare at her now.
"Um...
Neo-Moon, Serenity, one of you just heal them."

>
Neo-Moon nodded. A warm pink light ran over them, and they slumped
slightly. For a moment, it wasn't apparent whether or not they were

truly healed. Then, Nephrite whispered softly, "Mako-chan?" The pain was
clear in his eyes as he held his arms out to her.

>With a sob, Jupiter flung herself into his arms. He stroked her hair and
kissed her gently, tears shimmering in his own dark eyes.

Kunzite

>blinked slightly as he lifted his head. Mercury shyly walked up to him.
"Hi," she whispered. He hugged her gently as her tears trickled down her

>cheeks. Jadeite and Mars ran to each other, hugging tight and kissing,
apologizing for all that they'd done in the months Jadeite was

>possessed.

>Serenity smiled and hugged Neo-Moon tightly. Venus smiled at the
reunions taking place and danced around a bit. Saturn gave a sigh of

>relief and leaned against her Silence Glaive thankfully. Uranus held
Neptune tight, making soft jokes about the couples in front of them.

>Pluto just stood.

>'This isn't the end, not yet,' she thought to herself. 'There's
something else we have to do before I can repair time for good.

But what

>is it?'

>

>

> SIX

> _____

>

>Time: a little while later
Place: the shuttle heading back to the Moon of Earth

>

>
Everyone packed into the shuttle, thankful that they'd finally stopped Beryl.

>Mars handed out bottles of water to the other nine Senshi and three Generals
present. They all quickly drank them down. Pluto hung on the fringes of the

>group, gazing out the window with a strangely angry look on her face.

>"I'm sorry about Zoisite," Saturn apologized to Venus. "But I had to ki--" She
suddenly broke down crying.

>
Venus came over and hugged her. "Hotaru, it's not your fault," she whispered.

>"I was there. He tried to kill Usagi. Serenity would've been devastated. You did
what you had to."

>
Saturn sniffled and wiped her nose on a handkerchief Kunzite handed her. "I

>guess I should apologize to you too, Kunzite. You were good friends, weren't
you?"

>
The pale-haired general laughed. "Not that close. We were on-and-off friends,

>but he got on my nerves sometimes. Still," he said, his voice dropping a bit.
"it is a shame he had to die."

>
"I recovered his body," Jupiter said softly. "I think the mages can bring him

>back."

>"I think that would be best," Jadeite said, holding Mars's hand. "He told me
before the attack, 'I don't think I'm ready for this. I don't want to die'."

>
"No one ever _truly_ wants to die," Pluto murmured from her corner.

>
"While everyone is in a sorry fest," Mercury said lightly, "Um, sorry about

>throwing your dad's corpse into Pluto's attack, Uranus," she said
meekly. "I
mean, we could've reincarnated him if I hadn't done
that."

>
Uranus chuckled. "No, no, it's not a problem! Really."

>
"You sure?"

>
Uranus gave a nervous laugh. "I think... it is for the best...
um, I really didn't
>like him....

>Neptune changed the subject, seeing Uranus's discomfort. "Serenity,
did you tell
your mother we were coming back?"

>
Serenity nodded weakly, lying on a bench. The fight had taken
more out of her

>than had been apparent earlier. "I sent a transmission a few minutes
ago."

>Everyone except Pluto nodded in response. She still was gazing out
the window.

>"Hey, I think you look at Pluto, everyone!" Mercury cried.

>And everyone did. A telltale glow was forming from the sigil on her
forehead.
Her brow was furrowed in concentration.

>
Mars softly said to the others, "She is trying to communicate
with someone. I am

>not sure who, or where they are, but she seems to be trying pretty
hard. The
person is in another time and reality, actually,
according to my computer."

>
Some of their eyes widened. "That is beyond the rest of the
Senshi's abilities,

>if I am correct," Nephrite said from his position next to Jupiter.
"How is it
that she can?"

>
"I... I just... I really don't know," Mars finished lamely,
sinking back into

>Jadeite's arms.

>A flash from Pluto's forehead lit up the cabin they were in, before
settling
into a lighter, softer beacon. "She got through," Mars
whispered.

>
'Are you there?' Pluto sent out.

>
'I _just_ got back from your reality and I was about to start a
lesson,' a stubborn,

>soft female voice snapped. 'This had better be important!'

>'Would I have attempted to contact you from this far if it wasn't,
old friend?
This takes a lot to communicate from this far with
this sort of power.'

>
'My my, not for me, Setsuna,' the woman remarked dryly. 'You
should practice

>more. I can handle another apprentice in magic.'

>'Even your apprentices have apprentices! That's a bit odd,
mage.'

>Silence for a moment. 'Sorry, I had to answer a question. A
teacher's work is
never done,' a soft chuckle was heard.

'Particularly when they can think clearly

>again.'

>'The spell has been removed from you?'

>'Yes, Guardian, now stop wasting your energy and get to the point.
Something's
happened over there, I can sense it. I feel something
gathering there, a great

>power. What is going on?'

>Pluto related the battle to her.

>The woman seemed to pause to think. 'Do you want me to come there? I

can manage
it. It'll be easier on your mind. You're going to be terribly weak when you
>finish this communication.'
>'Fine, we'll discuss this when you get here,' Pluto said. As soon as she broke
her transmit off, she sank against the wall with a flash of light, breathing
>hard and feeling terribly weak like the woman had predicted.

>A few of the Senshi quickly hurried to her, helping her up and trying to ease
her. She couldn't focus on the faces, but she saw flashes of red, aqua, and
>purple, and knew which Senshi were helping her. Saturn was chanting a soft
mantra to heal her mind, while Mars was scanning her for any damage. Neptune
>helped her sit up and passed a glass of wine to her. Pluto sipped the wine
before pushing it aside. The rest of the Senshi hovered around her too.
>
The doors slid open, and no one noticed for a moment. Kunzite was the first to
>realize someone was there. A figure wrapped in a black hooded cloak, with the
hood pulled low, stood there. Apparently a woman, he realized, glancing over her
>black dress with the low v-neckline. She remained in the shadows, observing the
swarm of people around Pluto. "Hello there," she said softly.
>
They turned. "Who the he--" Uranus started before Neptune nudged her ribs with
>her elbow.
>The black-clothed woman didn't reply and slipped next to Pluto, dropping to her
knees beside her. She pressed her hands to the other woman's temples and a soft
>white glow formed, lighting up the mage's pale-skinned face and dark blue eyes
with narrow slits like a cat's or a reptile's for pupils, eyes which were
>glowing a bright blue. The light faded from her hands and eyes and the mage drew
back. Pluto sighed. "That's much better. You are getting quite good, you know."
>Don't need to speak the words anymore?"
>The mage shrugged. "It isn't necessary anymore for someone of my power to say
the words when they are able to concentrate and make it happen. I know I got
here quicker than usual, but I used a portal this time. It's easier since
teleportation magic can sometimes mess up my fragile sanity," she said with a
wry smile. "After all, who knows when something will go wrong for my mind to
slip back into the spell?"
>
The Senshi continued to eye her skeptically. "Does she have a name?" Uranus said
>dryly.
>"Not important yet," the mage said with a chill to her tone. "I don't plan to be
here longer than is needed." She sat down on the bench and crossed her legs. "Of
>course," she mused, "I do not know what I am needed _for_, or how long it shall
take..." She puzzled over this a second before shrugging her narrow shoulders.
>
"Are you a mage or something?" Venus asked, confused. "What did you do?"
>
The woman in question chuckled. "An archmage, if you want to be exact. Much higher
>up than just a regular mage. We don't need to use special words for

spells and have
access to a wider variety. I personally don't have as much power in healing arts as
>defense and offense-type spells though."

>"A mage is a type of sorceress, right?" Usagi asked.

>The archmage seemed almost offended for a moment. "Oh no, no Usagi! There is a
>difference between magic and sorcery--subtle though, not worth explaining right not."
>
"How can we believe what you've said?" Serenity said, struggling to sit up. "And how
>did you know Usagi's name?"

>"Don't bother her," Pluto said, her voice strong again. "We don't need her
>identity revealed in this timeline yet. I have enough trouble trying to fix it
>as it is."

>The archmage chuckled again. "Pluto, I've been dropping in wherever I want for
>years now--"
>
"And wrecking havoc with the timeline!"
>
The archmage shrugged with a light laugh and her eyes seemed to flash. "Pluto,
>Guardian of Time, never ceasing to meddle with the affairs of mortals or
>immortals. I think that I deserve to do as it pleases me..." her voice dropped
>lower and colder, "and besides, Pluto, for all you know, this reality is
>_supposed_ to go this way! Have you noticed that your precognitive abilities are
>not working correctly? You don't see time right! You cannot read the future
>correctly, and unless you have the information already, you can't scan the
>timeline to learn about someone! You're so wrapped up in your precious time
>even though, and you refuse to let anyone take over the responsibilities
>even if they are better qualified--"

>"SHUT UP!!!" Pluto suddenly shrieked, and everything fell silent. There was a
>larger light from the archmage's eyes than before. "I am sick of your little
>manipulations and trivial games! Don't you get tired of tormenting me?!"

>The archmage narrowed her eyes to slits. "Wasn't the last realty all a result of
>your manipulating, your little cosmic game to make the universe perfect? Isn't it
>true that you are too afraid to let someone else take over the Time Gate. I offered
>to and you refused. I think you've grown to be insane, Setsuna."
>
Pluto lifted her Time Key and swung it hard at the archmage.

>
It passed through her.
>
Saturn suddenly stood and lifted her Silence Glaive. It whirled around and
>stopped inches from Pluto's neck. Uranus was directly behind the archmage, her
>Space Sword pressed close to the archmage's throat.
>"You can remove that now,
>Uranus," she said coldly. "I won't attack."

>Pluto lowered her Time Key, and Saturn lowered her Silence Glaive afterward. "If
>you EVER push me like that again, I swear that I will find some way to make your
>life a living Hell, or at least send you there!"

>"Been there before. Quite warm there, and if you don't belong there, the people
>don't bother you. I think you'd like it there, once you get on Lucifer's good side,
>which could take a bit of time--"

>The door slammed shut hard as Pluto left the cabin.
>The Senshi and the three remaining Generals fixed their eyes on the archmage.
"Hmmm... I seem to have made her angry," she murmured.

>
The shuttle docked, and Pluto was the first off, storming to her room.

>
Queen Serenity came up and hugged her daughter and granddaughter tightly,

>before briefly embracing the Senshi and Generals. Endymion came running up the
path with Luna-P trailing after, and he quickly lifted Princess Serenity into

>his arms and kissed her. The Senshi all giggled while the moon princess blushed.
Luna-P bobbed around Usagi, and the two cat advisors came, darting between the

>Senshi's legs and voicing their greetings.

>The archmage hung behind during the reunion, observing in silence with the
slightest hint of a warm smile on her face.

>
"Hello there," a voice said to her out of nowhere.

>
She gave a start, then turned to see Saturn standing beside her.

"Oh, hello,

>Saturn. Do you remember me?" Saturn nodded. "Good. Don't tell the others yet
please. It is important that you don't." Saturn nodded.

>
Queen Serenity walked up and appeared surprised and a bit fearful. "Why, hello

>there, my old friend. I haven't seen you since my childhood and you still look
the same."

>
The archmage smiled and gave her a brief, awkward hug. "May I stay awhile,

>please? I seem to have some business to attend to here and--"

>"Of course, of course, there's an empty room next to Saturn's. Go right ahead."

>The archmage bowed and walked off towards the palace, and paused to call over
her shoulder to the Senshi, "Since I will be staying here for a bit, I think you

>should know my name. It's Immora." With that, Immora headed off to her room.

>

>Time: a few hours later
Place: the dining hall, the Palace

>

>
Mars ate her food in silence, as did Pluto. The other Senshi were all talking

>eagerly, the Generals also talking. Zoisite would be brought back later that
evening. Queen Serenity sipped her tea as she talked with some members of her

>army. The table was very long, so it held many people. Mars glanced to Saturn,
chattering away with Usagi. Saturn seemed happier than usual, and her pink-haired

>friend seemed to be too. Mars squeezed Jadeite's hand, who was sitting next to her.
He seemed surprised at the sudden gesture, for he'd been in the middle of talking

>with Mercury, sitting across from him. He smiled down at Mars and kissed her
forehead before going back to his conversation. The Inner Senshi were all talking

>across the table to each other and the Generals. Princess Serenity was talking with
anyone willing to listen. Uranus and Neptune ignored everyone else as they talked,

>but Mars noticed Uranus would sometimes cast a cold glance in Immora's direction.
Uranus didn't trust the archmage, and neither did Mars. She noted Pluto, sitting
>in silence, was studying Immora seemingly, as if trying to figure something out
about her. Immora was laughing and smiling, talking with Kunzite about some obscure
>things Mars didn't follow, probably magic-related. Kunzite seemed to have a talent for
magic, and Immora seemed to be trying to help him with it.
>
Mars didn't feel safe in here. She could sense the power radiating from each of
>her fellow Senshi, which was a familiar thing to her. Saturn and Pluto gave off
the greatest amounts, along with Princess Serenity. Saturn and Serenity seemed
>pretty evenly matched in power, but Mars could feel that Saturn's was a bit
stronger. Then she could sense the power from the Generals, pretty strong too.
>What was unnerving her was the amount that Immora gave off. Her power levels
were very high, almost smothering to Mars's senses. Immora seemed perfectly at
>ease with this power, and didn't flaunt it, but Mars still didn't feel right
about the archmage. She listened to Kunzite's conversation with her. "--yes, but
>how do you form the object? I can create energy projectiles, shields, light, et
cetera... but how do you make a _solid_ object?! It doesn't seem possible!"
>
Immora laughed. Her laughter seems a bit odd, Mars thought. I don't think she
>laughs a lot. She seems almost sad. I'd probe her mind further, but she'd
undoubtedly be able to wipe my mind clean as a slate if I do!
>
"Kunzite, you are limiting yourself," Immora chuckled. "With energy, you can form it,
>shape it, control it how you will. There is no real limit with energy-related objects.
Solid objects have to be formed with the mind more so than the energy. With the
>energy, it springs forth at your command, you shape it with your thoughts, simple as
that. With a solid object, you must form the image in your mind first, then construct
>it in the physical world. You have to bind all the pieces together with your power.
You can't just call upon an object, you have to make the object. After you form it,
>you must keep your thoughts on it or else it will collapse. If you wish for it to remain,
you have to use the proper incantation to make it a true part of the physical world, or
>else it simply exists in this world, but it resides in your mind still."

>A few of the Senshi had tuned in to the conversation and were listening with
some confusion at her words. Pluto, Saturn, Jupiter, and Mercury had all taken
>interest in it, along with the queen and her daughter, and Endymion.

>Kunzite puzzled over Immora's words. "Could you demonstrate for me?"

>"Ah... I could, but may I finish eating first? I don't eat much, but this food is
simply wonderful!"
>
Kunzite chuckled. "Go right ahead."
>
As soon as Immora finished wiping her mouth after eating, she nodded to Kunzite.
>She then stood and called to the table, "Excuse me, I'll be casting

a spell in
a moment... those of you who might be mages aligned with the afterlifes might have
>an unusual reaction to my energy."
>Several people left the room. Mars sat and wondered what she could have meant by
that.
>
She didn't have time to consider. Immora's eyes glowed with bright blue light.
>A sphere of white light appeared in front of her, and winds seemed to blow from
it for her hair blew back as did her cloak. "This, Kunzite, is a simple energy
>construct, like the ones you use." Immora's eyes widened slightly and Mars saw
that she was concentrating hard on the light. It started to take the shape of a
>bouquet of roses. They started to color green and red, and soon a glowing
bouquet was floating in front of her. Kunzite reached for it and his hand passed
>through it. "They aren't solid yet. I formed it much slower than is needed so
you could see the process." She then narrowed her eyes a bit. Shadows and
>highlights appeared on the rose petals and leaves. Their scent could be smelled
around the table. They flashed, then the light was gone and they dropped onto
>the table. Immora sat down.
>Kunzite grabbed the bouquet and examined them with surprise. "This is amazing!
You just created them from light!"
>
Immora laughed. "You can look at it that way, if you will. That took much
>longer than I would have liked. I wanted you to see them form. I can do it much
quicker though..." There was a brief flash, and a bouquet appeared right in Queen
>Serenity's lap.
>The queen started, then laughed and breathed in their scent. "Why thank you,
old friend. They are quite lovely."
>
Immora smiled. Mars suddenly wanted to pull her hair out. How the heck did the
>queen know Immora?! And Pluto---how did they meet?
>Immora looked over at Mars now. Her voice came to Mars's mind. 'Is something
troubling you, Senshi of fire? I noticed you observing my spell with some
>unease.'
>'How do you know the queen and Pluto?'
>Immora just looked away and went back to talking with Kunzite.

>Mars fumed. I'm gonna wheedle it out of her if I have to delve into her
subconscious to find it out!!!
>
Immora stood and walked over to stand in a dark corner. What a wacko! Mars
>thought to herself.
>Everyone was chattering again, and someone asked Serenity, "Are you and Endymion
ever going to get married?"
>
The two in question laughed. "Eventually! We just can't decide what the best day
>would be!"
>Nephrite teased Endymion, "C'mon, why don't you two just run off and elope so
you don't have to worry about it?"
>
"It's not as romantic though," Serenity said. "Besides, I want all my friends there.
>It wouldn't be the same."
>"Do you guys think you'll ever marry?" Endymion asked the generals.

>"I hope so," Nephrite said and he and Jupiter smiled to each other.
"I think it'd
be nice."
>
"It would be, wouldn't it?" Jupiter said with a smile.

>
"Hey, do you think you'll _ever_ hook up with anyone?" Venus asked Uranus and Neptune.

>
All the senshi and the generals turned to look at them. "Yeah, Haruka," Neptune teased.

>"Do you consider yourself to be in a relationship right now?"

>Uranus coughed. "Do _you_?"

>"I do. You?"

>"Yup."

>The others looked at them quizzically. "Well, who are these guys?" Serenity asked. "Do
we know them?"

>
The two women laughed. "Oh yes, you do!" they chuckled.

>
"Well, who are they?"

>
The two pointed at each other and smiled.

>
"Oh... my..." Mars breathed. "I had no idea that you two were le--" she turned bright red. "NevermindwhatIwasjustabouttosay!"

>They both laughed again.

>"I don't see anything wrong with it," Jupiter commented. "I think you two look
cute together."

>
"'Cute'?" Uranus grimaced. "I hate that word... makes me think of those little puppy dogs..."

>Neptune poked her in the arm. "I see nothing wrong with the word... even if it
is inaccurate."

>
"Oh really? Well then, what am I, hmmmm?"

>
"She's gotcha there," Venus teased. "Now what do you do?"

>
"I think you're incredibly beautiful," Neptune said.

>
"I am, aren't I?"

>
Neptune bopped her on the head.

>
"I think the correct response," Mercury said, "is 'so are you'."

>
"Ah well, I know she is, she knows she is, everybody knows she is, so why reiterate it?"

>The group continued talking for the next several minutes.

>When everyone was finished eating, Queen Serenity stood and read a letter that
she'd received. The government of Uranus conveyed their thanks for solving the problem of the Dark Kingdom on their planet. However, with the king dead, the
queen an alcoholic, and the prince missing for over a decade, they had no ruler.

>They asked for Princess Uranus to return and take the throne. Queen Serenity
looked up from the letter to judge Uranus's reaction. Uranus paled with anger.

>"How long will it take to establish communications with them?"

>"Hmmm... I am not sure. Many of their communications systems are down... "

>Immora suddenly piped up, "You do use crystals for communications, correct?"

>Uranus cocked an eyebrow. "Yes, but my planet has an unusual rotation and sometimes
the signals cannot be aligned correctly--"

>
"I can establish a link for you. We use crystal spheres for communicating in my
>school too. I can get through even if your crystals can't."

>She opened her closed fist and a ball of glass about as big around as her head
appeared. She handed it to Uranus, who carefully held it. "Can you get me
>through to General Toren?" she asked. "He is in charge of the army and knows me
well."

>
Immora nodded. A face appeared in the ball; Toren. "Who the hell is using
>this---huh? Princess?"

>Uranus narrowed her eyes. "Yes, it is. What idiot decided that I had to come
back and take the throne?"

>
Toren turned an angry red. "It was I. Look, we don't have a ruler and the people
>are panicking. They think we're going to be attacked again. We need someone here
to restore order. Things are too chaotic to vote on a ruler, so we need a member
>of the royal family to take over."

>"Why don't you track down my brother then?!"

>"He's been gone forever! We tried to, but we couldn't find him. Must've changed
his name or something."

>
Uranus gave an exasperated sigh. "Why not get my mom sober for once and give it to
>her! "

>Toren rolled his eyes. "You don't seem to understand, Princess. She can't
possibly lead. She's too weak and we're probably going to lose her any day now.

>Too much alcohol in her system. How the heck did she get started on that?!"

>"Don't ask. Look, I don't want to rule! Why not you? You lead the armed
forces, you should be capable of it."

>
Toren was fuming. "Haruka!! I explained this to you already! You get your ass
>over here and take the throne! Your mother is dying so you should be here with
her! If you don't get over here, I have full authority to arrest you--"

>
"Fine!" Uranus snapped, and she hurled the ball at the wall. It shattered into
>millions of tiny shards. A few glanced off her but she didn't seem to notice.

>Immora sadly walked over and made the shards float in the air, and they
shimmered into nonexistence. The other Senshi were frozen in shock. "How long
>will she have to stay there?" Neptune whispered.

>Queen Serenity kept her eyes facing the floor. "I don't know. It could be days,
it could be months. I have no way of telling."

>
A healer walked in and said softly, "Zoisite is awake now. He'll be very weak
>from now on, but he's alive."

>The Senshi and Generals silently walked into the healer's room. Immora,
unnoticed, went out into the gardens.

>

>
Time: a few minutes later

>Place: the healer's room

>

>Zoisite struggled a bit, but he managed to sit up. "Well hello," he

said
weakly. "Minako?"
>
Venus walked over and gave him a tight hug. Zoisite kissed her forehead and
>smiled up at her. "Do you forgive me for what happened? I sorry if I hurt
you, but I was under their control."
>
She nodded. "Of course I forgive you."
>
Saturn was standing motionless. They could barely tell she was breathing, and
>she wasn't blinking. Jupiter waved a hand in front of her face. "Are you okay,
Saturn?" she asked in concerned tones.
>
Saturn blinked once. "I... that Immora... something's happening!" She suddenly
>rushed out and headed in the direction of the gardens.

>The Generals stayed behind as the Senshi rushed after her in surprise. She was
moving quite fast and didn't seem to be about to tire.
>
They were shocked and quickly stopped in the gardens. Saturn was several feet
>in front of them, a look of horror in her eyes. "Saturn Senshi Make-up," she
said softly, transforming into Sailor Saturn. She held her glaive in front of
>her, not moving. The other Senshi transformed, but stood behind.

>Immora was in the very center of the gardens, which lay in the center of the
palace grounds, tears trailing down her face. Her eyes were glowing bright
>white; her irises and pupils couldn't be seen. She hovered above the grass,
wearing a strange black outfit that appeared to be all one-piece, covering her
>from neck to fingertips to feet, wearing black leather boots over that. Her hair
billowed around her as she floated. The sky went red and suddenly a chill gale
>blew through the palace grounds. The Senshi shivered and quickly huddled
together to share body heat. Immora's eyes flashed red a moment, and the debris
>swirling around didn't even touch her. "I'm so sorry," she said in a choked
voice, to herself. "I have to destroy it all. I-I never wanted to, but I have
>to!" She crossed her arms over her chest, her hands resting on their opposite
shoulders. A bright flash started to spread through the Palace.
>
"NOOOOO!!!!!!" Saturn screamed. She dove forward with the Silence Glaive and
>plunged the blade into Immora's chest. Immora stood stock still, her feet
touching the ground. Blood trickled down her and she gave a little gasp. Saturn
>slid the blade out.

>Immora stood shaking a moment, the awful wound plainly visible. She closed her
eyes, still shaking. The wound slowly closed up, the only sign it was there was
>the blood still on her skin and the tear in her clothing that bared some of her
pale skin. "W-why?" she whispered. She lifted her hands and a burst of energy
>pulsed through the air, forcing Saturn's footing back. "LEAVE ME ALONE!!!!"
Immora shouted, increasing the energy.
>
"SILENCE GLAIVE... APPLY!!!" Saturn shouted. She didn't use enough power to
>destroy the grounds around her, but the resulting energy caused Immora to slide
across the ground on her back, crying out in pain.

>
Silver Moon was about to rush to help, when Pluto held her back.
"We can't hope
>to beat her. She's most powerful archmage in existence. Saturn could possibly
stand a chance on her own though."
>
"Wouldn't she have a better chance if we helped?"
>
"No, not really. It has to do with magic. I'll explain later."

>
Immora held her hands out again, and a burst of metal shards appeared, racing
>for Saturn.
>"SILENCE BLOCK!!!" she shouted just in time to block them from hitting her. Her
eyes went red and a burst of black energy appeared, rushing to Immora. Immora crossed her arms over her chest again, and the energy swirled around her. She
flinched slightly, and it slowly disappeared.

>
"Amazing," Pluto said in awe. "Mistress Nine's abilities were transferred to
>Saturn when she was possessed in the Original Time. Somehow, she forced them to
be dormant, but a latent ability has given her access to them again."
>
"Anta shurru jasida kariman!" Immora shouted. A large fire swirled around here,
>spreading through the grass quickly. Saturn screamed in pain and tried to douse
the flames.
>
Suddenly the Generals appeared with Uranus and Neptune by their side. The flames died down as Neptune sent a wave of water skimming across the flames. The
Generals stood by the Senshi, not offering any more help.
>
"She's weakening!" Pluto called. "She's using incantations now; she can't
>concentrate enough to use her magic without them!"

>"Arrrggghhh!!" Saturn's eyes glowed with red light as she sent another wave of
energy at Immora. Immora flinched and was forced back. "What do I have to do to
>stop you?!" Saturn shouted as a burst of energy from her Silence Glaive knocked
Immora onto her back.
>
She stood, blood trickling down her lip. Her eyes were blazing in light, and
>she looked frighteningly powerful as she stood, clothed in black, with an amazingly
calm look on her face. An aura of blue and silver swirled around her. "Spirit of
>death," she started, "come to me. Aid me in my battle. Spirit of death, go to her!"
A small black form appeared near her, surrounded in smoke. It suddenly shot at Saturn,
>then stopped. "I am your master, why do you stop?!" Immora snarled. The spirit
disappeared.
>
Saturn smirked. "I am the Dark Messiah, whether possessed or not. I am aligned
>with creation, destruction, death... It cannot harm me because _I_ am the master."
>Immora sneered, "You cannot defeat me! You _will_ not!" A burst of light around
her surrounded both her and Saturn. Saturn screamed in pain, and sweat trickled down Immora's forehead. "Nanu ast sheira killisa!" Saturn was forced to her knees
screaming as the sky blackened and she was writhing in pain.
>
Suddenly she reached out with her glaive, glowing white now, and

slammed it

>against Immora's side. The light connected with Immora and her eyes lost their
bright glow, her wide eyes with their strange pupils appeared. "No!!!" she

>shrieked. "Manna tarra carnasonu shiva!" Saturn fell to her side, unconscious,
her face twisted in pain. Immora moaned and fell over on her belly, face

>sideways. Her face was white as a sheet and her breathing ragged.

>The sky turned it's regular color. "Saturn!!!" Silver Moon shouted, quickly
rushing forward. She gather Saturn up in her arms and started to heal her.

>
Pluto went over to check on Immora. She was bloodied less than Saturn, but

>Saturn had burn wounds also. Pluto carefully lifted Immora. Her breathing was
too shallow and her heartbeat low. "Poor thing," Pluto whispered. "She can't

>die, and unless she is healed, she will remain in pain forever. She doesn't even
have the comfort of death's release to look forward too."

>
Immora coughed, blood trickling down her face. She slowly opened her eyes. Dark circles lined them, and she flinched at the bright light of the sun. "pl-pluto?
please... call sharra here... i need her help..."

>
Pluto nodded.

>
Saturn opened her eyes, healed. "Why did you fight her?!" Neo-Moon shouted.

>
"She was going to destroy the entire palace... destroy the moon... kill us all... I don't know why she would, but I had to stop her."

>A woman suddenly appeared in a flash of light. An elf. She had brown skin, long
purple hair, and slanted ice blue eyes. Her pointed ears went out to the sides

>[think Ail and Ann]. She wore a simple purple dress. She came forward and lifted
Immora into her arms carefully. "I am terribly sorry this happened. This should never have occurred. I am very sorry and apologize for anything she's done. We
should have never let her come." She disappeared with Immora.

>
Jupiter helped Saturn to her feet. "Uhnnnn... I ache all over," she moaned.

>"She's pretty powerful! I'm gonna go take a hot bath." She stumbled off to her
room.

>
"That was awful," Mercury whispered, face pale. "She could have been killed!"

>
"She apparently knew what she was doing," Uranus said, clothed in her princess

>dress. She was carrying some bags with her. She looked down sadly. "I have to
leave for my home planet in half an hour. I guess I should go ahead and say

>goodbye to you guys."

>"Not yet," Venus chirped. "We're gonna go to the shuttle with you and see ya
off!"

>
The Generals went back to their rooms as the Senshi followed Uranus to the docking bay to wait for her shuttle. She didn't say much, but she told them,
"I'll try to come back in a couple of weeks. Don't wanna miss the ball," she said with a wink.

>The Senshi smiled and hugged her. The shuttle landed and called for passengers
to get aboard. Uranus handed her bags to a man there who put them away. "Well,
>see you later," she said with a sad smile to them. "Hope I don't cause the
economy to crash or anything. I'm not good at leading a bunch of people unless
>it's a battle."
>They smiled, a couple wiping tears away. Neptune came forward and gave her a long hug, then they kissed briefly. "Bye," she whispered. "I love you."
>
>"I love you too," Uranus said with a smile as she walked up the ramp. The door closed and the shuttle left.
>"This sucks," Usagi commented dryly.
>
>Time: a bit later
>Place: somewhere in another reality
>
>"OWW!!! THAT HURTS!!!!" The scream echoed through the whole building.
>"Well stop moving!" Another voice shouted.
>Immora winced as Ka'ina, poured hot water over her and rubbed balm over her arms.
>Immora was in one of the large baths [public bath style]. Ka'ina brushed her long dark hair behind her ear as her eyes, a swirl of silver, green, and blue, fixed on Immora's. "You shouldn't have gotten into that fight. Now you're magic is going to be weakened for awhile."
>Immora snarled, "You could at least heal me with yours!"

>Ka'ina cupped her chin and forced Immora to look at her. "Look, the way I see it, you got into this fight and got hurt, you deserve this. You shouldn't have tried to destroy the palace. Why the hell were you going to anyways?!"
>"I don't know," Immora moaned. "I don't know! That insanity spell is coming back I think! Argh! Too many spells are on me, I can't tell which spells are active or not!"
>Ka'ina sighed and scrubbed Immora's back. "Did you _ever_ apologize to Pluto
>for that little incident several hundred years ago?"
>"I only cracked a _tiny_ part of the Time Gate when she refused to let me take control! Not enough to mess anything up!"

>Ka'ina sighed and walked out, leaving Immora to seethe in the water. "Doesn't anyone believe me anymore?" Immora whined.
>"Don't whine," Ka'ina scolded her. "You are much too old for that!"
>"I am not! I might be old in years, but I sure don't FEEL LIKE IT!!!"
>Ka'ina sighed as she shut the door. 'I feel awful, using this spell on her... she doesn't even know about this one...' Tying a robe around her waist, she started to walk to her room. 'I used my magic in the wrong way. She _forbid_ me from using this type of magic... but I still did it. I hate myself sometimes...' She walked into her room and flopped down on the bed. 'But I love her. And this spell makes

>her return that and forget about that Akeru person. She's mine now,
and unless she breaks my spell, she'll STAY mine!'

>

>END AWAKENINGS ~~~ NEXT: ENCOUNTERS <div>

3. Encounters

~~SILVERMOON~~

> Encounters
 Seven through Eight

> a Bishoujo Senshi Sailormoon fanfiction by Immora

> _____

>Please see the author's notes in Resurrection for all copyright

information.

>
I apologize for the awful line-wrapping.

>

>

> SEVEN

> _____

>

>Time: the next day
Place: the palace on Uranus

>

>
Uranus sat on a throne in her indigo princess dress, her face a

>mixture of bored and exasperated. Her head rested on her hand,
elbow propped on the armrest as Toren read a report off to her.

>Uranus fidgeted in her seat. Damn throne! she thought to
herself. Why the hell does it have to be so uncomfortable?! She looked around at her (boring) surroundings. Ooo, yay. Her throne
was on a pedestal with several steps leading up to it, a red

>carpet leading from the base of the throne to the large wooden
double doors at the entrance to the throne room. Candles and

>tall windows lined the walls. The floor was marble. Uranus hated
it.

>
"--the Vidiava family requests an audience with you," Toren was

>reading. "They said--"

>"Why?" Uranus interrupted. "Why do they want to talk to me?"

>Toren was seething. That woman _had_ to learn to stop
interrupting! "They want to talk about some ideas they had for

>improving our economy. Their son has offered to take your place
when you're gone--"

>
"What are his qualifications for that?" she murmured. She'd

>heard basically the same thing all morning. So-and-so family has
idea for improvement, son/daughter wants to rule, a number of

>marriage proposals she promptly refused.

>"--and he is quite good with the people..."

>Uranus blinked. She'd missed everything Toren had just said.
"No more marriage proposals, I hope."

>
"None this time. I still don't see why you turned down Ranfa,
>he's a perfectly decent young man and a woman of your
position
should have a spouse, and besides, you've known him
awhile and
>he's quite smitten with you--"

>Uranus let out a loud laugh and sat up in her throne. "Oh, he
is,
is he? Tell him, like the others, that I am not
>interested! We should make an announcement that all
marriage
proposals should cease because I won't except them!"
>
Toren raised an eyebrow and sighed. "Really, he's a great young
man, quite popular with the other ladies--"

>Uranus hopped down from her seat, kicked off her heels
(she
really hated wearing high heels) and walked over to Toren.
>"Toren, I don't care. I really don't care. I'm already in
a
relationship and I am QUITE happy with it. I don't want to run
off and marry some guy I barely know. I don't want to marry
some
guy, if you get right down to it!" She laughed and turned
to
>walk back to the (uncomfortable) throne.

>"What are you saying?" Toren asked in surprise, adjusting
his
reading glasses. He smoothed his (fast graying) brown hair
down.
>"I mean, about the marriage issue?"

>She turned and glared at him. What a dense fool! "Toren,
why
don't you make a general announcement to the families that
seem
>to be intent on getting me wed that I will not marry their
sons
because I am just not interested, okay?"
>
"Not interested in getting married to a man or--"
>
"I am homosexual you fool!!!" she shrieked at him. "I am not
>about to marry a man! I already have a lover, and I am
QUITE
CONTENT to continue my relationship with her, okay?! Now go
put
>out a communication through those weird crystal-thingies
we're
using now to tell those dumbasses I am NOT marrying any of
their
>sons, okay?! "

>Toren was frozen in place with shock.

>"WELL?!!?!"

>"Yes, princess," he murmured, dazed, and walked off to send
the
message.
>
"And get ME a crystal while you're at it! I need to talk with
>Michiru, she'll want to make sure I'm okay!"

>"The princess of Neptune?"

>"YES the princess of Neptune! She's the only Michiru I
know!!!"
Uranus was seething. Toren quickly ran out, retrieved a
crystal
>ball for her, and shakily handed it to her. He promptly
left
after that. Uranus sighed and moved her hand a few inches
over
>the ball in a circular motion. "Patch me through to
Princess
Michiru of Neptune please. Tell her it's Haruka."

>
The mage on the other end answered, "Hold on a couple minutes.

>It'll take awhile to get through the magical field around
the
Earth moon. Some strange residue--" The man cut off as he
started
>the spell.

>Damn that Immora; she just had to get into that battle
with
Saturn! Who knows how long this'll take!? Uranus impatiently

>slid down in her seat to wait.

>

>Time: several minutes later
Place: Pluto's room, the Palace, the
Moon Kingdom
>

>
Pluto sat on her bed, Saturn on hers, talking with Neptune, who

>was resting in an easy chair across from them. They
weren't
really discussing anything in particular. Pluto was still
a bit
>upset about some of Immora's comments to her, Saturn weak
from
her battle yesterday. Neptune was a bit saddened by Uranus's

>temporary departure, since it was still uncertain when
she'd
return. Pluto was in the middle of saying something when she
glanced over to the communications crystal on her dresser.
"Hmmm?
It's glowing? Who'd be calling in--" Pluto ran her hand
over the
>top of it. "Hello there, who's calling?"

>"Hello," a mage on the other end said. "A call for
Princess
Michiru of Neptune, from... ah, Haruka... ?"

>
Apparently a fairly powerful mage, Pluto thought, to find
Neptune
>here. "Put it through. Oh, sorry about the magic field;
Saturn
got in a battle with an archmage yesterday."
>
"I can guess who..." the mage murmured.
>
"Excuse me?" Neptune said, waving her arms. "I believe there's

>a call from Haruka to me, not that mage to you. I'd like to
talk
to her..."
>
"Oh, sorry!" Pluto said with a laugh. She handed the ball,

>about the size of her head, to Neptune.

>Neptune pressed her hand to it. Uranus's face appeared.
"Hello!"
she said cheerfully.
>
"Hi there!" Neptune giggled. "How's it going over there?

>Anything interesting happening?"

>"Well... hey, go into our room. HEY PLUTO, TAKE THE
BALL!!!
Redirect the call to our room, 'kay Setsuna? THANKS!!"

>
Pluto winced and whispered to Neptune, "Doesn't she know I can
hear
>her just fine?"

>Neptune handed the ball to Pluto and went into the room she
and
Uranus shared. She sat down on their bed near the window (the

>other closer to the door went unused now that the two

were
sleeping in the same bed) and picked up her own ball. Uranus's
>face appeared in one half, Pluto's in the other half. "Okay, go
away Pluto!"
>
Pluto laughed and her face disappeared, leaving Uranus's the

>only one their. "Toren went to send out a message for me, so I'm
alone now," Uranus commented.
>

>
"So, what's going on?" Neptune inquired, lying back on the

>large pillows.

>"Well, lots of people have offered to take the throne, I've
received a few marriage proposals from guys I've never met,

>Toren knows about my, ah, 'interests' now. I kinda screamed it
at him when he kept pushing me to marry some Ran-something-or-other guy."
>
Neptune laughed. "Oh okay. Did you visit your mother yet?"

>
"Yup. I don't think she's going to make it much longer. She's

>pretty weak. They sobered her up, but she's still in no
condition to even get out of her bed. She was surprised to see
>me; she really only had vague memories of me since she
was
usually wallowing in alcohol when I lived here. Ah well, if she
>_had_ been able to think for herself, she probably would've

tried to help me out when I was a kid, and then Dad would've

>beat _her_ too."

>Neptune gave a weak, sad smile. "It's a real shame your dad had
to be like that. You deserve so much better, love."

>
Uranus smiled and blushed. "Thanks for the compliment," she

>said, then dropped her voice lower with a sweet smile, "but I
have all I need now that I'm with you."
>
Neptune smiled. "Thanks, I could say the same for you..." Uranus

>laughed.

>They continued to talk for the next few hours.

>

>Time: roughly the same
Place: Serenity and Usagi's room.
>

>
Mars was visiting Serenity and helping her brush her long silvery
hair. She'd taken it down from her odango to brush out, and it was

a tangled mess. "How can you stand having hair this long?!" Mars asked
>in an awed tone.

>Serenity giggled. "Family tradition. The girls always have long hair tied

up in odango. It's just a trademark."
>
Mars smiled and glanced at the communications crystal. The

>image was scrambled and kept switching between images. For some
reason it kept picking up only other people's transmissions and
>not the ones meant for them, and then the image and sound kept
switching at random, never matching. It was so annoying! The

>constant garbled voices got on your nerves after awhile...

>Serenity looked over to watch too. She briefly saw some Mercurian

baron's face, Uranus's face (must be talking with Neptune),
Jadeite,
>a duchess from Saturn, a young giggling girl, a peasant man, Naru,

Immora... Immora?!?!"Did you see that?!" Serenity gasped.

>
Mars just groaned. Would that archmage just GO AWAY?!!!

>
"Let me finish brushing your hair and we'll go see. She might

>just be talking with Pluto or something..." She better not be
here
she had better not be here... I swear I will hurt her as
badly as

>I can if we see her!!!

>Mars finished one half of Serenity's hair, and Serenity pulled
it
up, twisted the top part into an odango, pinned it, and let

>the rest hang down. By the time she was done, Mars was
almost
finished. Serenity pulled the rest of her hair up. "Well,
let's

>go see if she's here."

>They wandered around through the halls and bumped into a
woman
going the opposite way. "Oh, sorry about that!" she
apologized. "I

>was lost in thought, I should have been paying attention."

>"It's alright," Mars said with a smile. She noted the woman
had
unusual eyes, the pupils were white and her irises were a
swirl

>of emerald, cerulean, and silver that constantly shifted.
Her
hair was dead straight, reached to her waist, and was very
dark,

>her skin tanned and smooth except for a small, pale mole under the

right corner of her mouth. She had very delicate features and

>was taller than Mars. She wore a cerulean dress that was in
a
style like Immora's, with a hoodless cloak fastened around her

>shoulders with a flat gray stone. "A mage?" Mars asked before
she
realized what she was saying.

>
"Yes," the woman answered. "My name is Ka'ina. I am a student

>of Immora's. You know her, I assume. Your friend Sailor
Saturn
gave her quite a beating."

>
Mars laughed. "I'd say she gave one to Saturn! That woman is

>powerful!" And boy is she a bitch!

>Ka'ina chuckled. "Immora gets carried away in battles. She
would
undoubtedly return to grovel at Saturn's feet begging for

>forgiveness. Her mind is starting to slip again and it's
all
Sharra and I can do to keep it from going completely."

>
Serenity remarked, "She was a nice person on the inside, I

>could sense."

>Ka'ina nodded. "She really is; she is very kind, but she
does
have a cruel streak. She's very dependent and hates being

alone.

>All she really needs is someone that loves her..." Ka'ina trailed
off.

>
"Who'd love _her_? You'd have to be as crazy as her!" Mars said

>bitterly.

>Ka'ina flinched slightly. "Ah... I am her lover..." Ka'ina said
slowly.

>
Mars turned near the color of her hair. "Omigosh I'm sorry! I

>didn't mean it... I... um..." Mars turned around and fumed. Great,
I
just insulted this woman that I barely know. She'll probably

>turn me into dust or something. Strange... I get a really bad
feeling about her though. Something seems wrong...

>
"It's alright," Ka'ina said softly. "I guess I am a bit..."

>insane... for falling for someone like her... well, I better go
now, goodbye."

>
Serenity smiled at her. "Bye!"

>
Mars didn't say anything. That woman had a strange spell around

>her, but she couldn't tell what it was. It seemed like she was
controlling someone...

>
She and Serenity walked off.

>
"What was it we left our room to do?" Serenity asked.

>
Mars suddenly realized she'd completely forgotten too.

>Shrugging, they walked off to go visit the Generals. We might as
well, Mars thought as they wandered through the palace.

>
Ka'ina sadly looked at the watch she held. Immora was supposed

>to show up over three hours ago. She was never late and would
have contacted Ka'ina if something went wrong. Did she not want

>to see her anymore? Or maybe... could she have broken the spell?!

>Ka'ina sighed and walked through the wall, outside to the
gardens, never once caring that she'd passed through solid rock.

>

>____

>

>Uranus laughed as she finished filing her nails, tossing the
file aside. She didn't like fixing her own nails herself, but >she didn't feel like asking someone to do it for her. Plus, she
was too busy talking to Neptune through the crystal to wander

>away from the crystal.

>Neptune kept chattering away when the door opened behind her.
She held up a finger to signal "wait a second", then turned to >talk with the person. Uranus saw it was Naru. She draped her legs
over the armrest as she sat to wait, glancing into her mirror with

>mild amusement. She always used to have cuts and bruises on her face
as a kid, but she had healed up nicely. No scars on her face, a few

>on her back, and of course a mark on her ribs from the bullet wound
>her father inflicted. Uranus flipped her pale bangs out of her
deep blue
>eyes and noted that she needed to get them trimmed. She was growing
>her hair out slightly, still keeping it short, but a more
feminine
>style than she used to wear. Neptune said it looked nice on her, so
>Uranus decided she might as well keep the style. She
half-heartedly
>studied her face, then turned back to the crystal.
>Neptune waved Naru away. "I am so sorry, Haruka! I have to go to a
meeting!"
>Uranus sighed. "Oh okay... call later, alright?"
>Neptune giggled. "Of course I will! Talk to you later," she
softly, giving Uranus her sweetest smile. "I love you,

>Haruka."
>Uranus smiled back. "I love you, Michiru."
>Neptune blew her a kiss, and Uranus giggled as she waved at
her. The crystal went dark. Uranus sighed sadly. The hall was
>silent now. It was boring again.
>Toren walked in slowly, his face deathly pale, as if with
fear.
>Uranus looked up with confusion; What the hell is he so
scared
>about? "Y-You have a vis-visitor," he stuttered. "Sh-she
requests
to--see you n-now..."
>
"Who is it?" Uranus demanded irritably.
>
Toren opened his mouth to speak, and his voice failed him. He

>quickly darted back into the other room. Uranus rolled her
eyes
>and sat back in her throne correctly, watching with annoyance
as
>a shadow behind the curtains moved into the hall. Uranus
then
>stared in shock and considered summoning the guards or
transforming
>on the spot.
>The woman's pale face looked eerie with her crimson lipstick
and
dark lined eyes, combined with dark clothing. She wore a
>black hoodless cloak that trailed behind her, fastened with
a
>silver clasp. Her dress was a dark reddish brown, low-cut, the

>right side slit up to mid-thigh. She wore soft black
leather
>boots that covered up to her knees, making her steps
silent
>except for the sounds of her faded brownish-black cloak
dragging
>on the carpet. Three small black leather cords were tied
around
>her waist, one drooping down on the left of her waist, the
other
>two dipping on the right. Crimson beads were laced into
this.
>She had black gloves pulled to her elbows, made of soft
fabric
>but obviously good protection. A small dagger was strapped
with
>brown leather cords to each glove, a larger dagger tied to
her
>waist with the leather cords. The cords around her gloves made

>slight bulges appear between each twist of cord. She
wore
>dangling blood colored jewels on her ears, though her blond
hair
>covered one ear slightly. She had a serious expression on

her
face, but strangely emotionless also. She stopped several yards
>from the throne to bow her head in acknowledgment, then raised
her piercing dark blue eyes with reptilian slits to Uranus's
>face.
>"Immora..." Uranus hissed.
>Immora's lip twitched. "Correct."
>"Unusual outfit," Uranus remarked coolly.
>Immora cocked an eyebrow. She walked over to a cart resting
near the wall and poured herself a glass of a cold, non-alcoholic
>fruit drink. She sipped it lightly, silent. "You probably wonder

why I am here," Immora started, seemingly searching for the right
>words. "I was going to go straight to the Moon Kingdom, but there

is undoubtedly some sort of price on my head now... so I think I will
>avoid it for awhile. Anyways... I need to apologize to the Senshi
and
the Moon Kingdom for my... irrational behavior yesterday. I have a...
>condition... that seemed to have resurfaced yesterday."

>"What, are you insane?" Uranus sneered.
>"Precisely," Immora said simply.
>Uranus blinked in surprise.
>"My former teacher, Necros, placed a spell on me that gradually
caused my sanity to lessen more and more. Eventually, I went
>insane. A sorceress, Lorenada, healed me... seemingly. The spell

isn't completely removed and sometimes my mind will slip and I
>will have no control over my actions. That happened to me yesterday,

when I suddenly took it into my mind to attack the Palace. I sincerely
>apologize for that, and for harming Saturn like that. I would heal

her myself... but she probably wouldn't trust me to do that... and... my
>magic has grown very weak since that battle. It will take me a couple
more days until I have full control of my magic again. I am limited to
>telepathy, telekinesis, and simple spells for now. I only wear these
daggers so if someone attacks me I'll have some protection.
The
>slit in my skirt is so I can kick easier if someone attacks me.
I know that will eventually happen... I-I have been attacked here before."
>
Immora started getting nervous, it seemed, Uranus judged from her biting
>her lip and glancing around the room. "I've always defended myself with
magic though, so I don't know if I can defend myself without it..."
>
"Immora, why don't you get help?" Uranus asked as gently as she
>could. No matter what this woman claimed, Uranus was... afraid... of
her. She didn't want to have to fight her. This was a powerful
>archmage and could probably kill her easily. She wasn't going to
chance it.
>
Immora pushed her hair behind her ear, then pulled her hair out

>from behind her ears again. Must be a nervous habit,
Uranus
noted. She had sat down in a chair now, and was drumming
the
>long fingernails of her left hand on the armrest while her
right
hand rested under her chin. "I have tried to... find a
cure... but
>so far there really isn't anything I can do. No one is
powerful
enough to fully cure me. Since I am the most powerful
magical
>force that currently exists--other than pure magic, of
course--it
is hard for someone to use their magic in... well, to
combine
>their magic with mine to heal me. If someone tried to use
magic
against me, depending on the nature, my own would either
work
>automatically with it or against it. To heal me, because of
the
direct root of the spell, they would have to tap into energies
that reside in Hell, where the man that put this spell on me
is
now. My magic automatically counters magic from nether regions
>and that involving death." She then smirked slightly.
"Probably
the reason Saturn could hurt me as bad as she did was
that my
>magic, which is directly connected with my own mental
and
physical well-being, was so stressed to counter her own death-
>related forces that it just sapped my strength to the point that

I couldn't work the magic anymore. The reason none of the others
>could attack me was that I could easily defend myself against

fire-based power, love, water, etc... which is what the other
Senshi
>use. There would be no strain and therefore, I would have easily
won.
The Senshi would have tired out, and in using my magic to
negate
>theirs, I could actually become stronger from the effects of their

powers against me. Silver Moon's powers, no matter what, have a
basis
>of goodness and healing to them. That could easily have helped me

defeat Saturn by tapping into that once Silver Moon's energies
had
>been directed at me. That is why Pluto wanted no one else to
attack---
she knew my energy would be depleted by attacking
Saturn."
>
Uranus had listened with fascination at her entire explanation.
>"That's really amazing," she said, "but wouldn't my powers
have
had some strange effect on you? I am linked with Heaven, the
>wind, the earth, etc... since you are sensitive to the
more
Hellish powers, wouldn't you also be harmed by more Heavenly
>energies?"

>Immora thought about it. "That is likely..."she murmured.
"I
wouldn't try though," she warned. "I tend to have strange...
>bonds... with people linked to either Heaven or Hell. I don't
know
why, it seems our souls are connected. I have no idea why.

>Welllll... Mages draw their energies from all around. Our powers
are based on the energies around us, the two strongest obviously

>being the two-afterworlds, the first places to exist. Since we
draw so much more energy from these than the other areas, we

>have strong spiritual connections with those aligned with them."

>"Like a soul-sister," Uranus murmured to herself. This was her
first interesting visitor all day, and she found she was actually

>gaining an understanding of this unusual woman through this

conversation.

>
Immora laughed softly. "I guess you could say that. Very few

>people are aligned with those places, so yes, in a sense, the
group of mages combined are all a bunch of soul-sisters and

>soul-brothers. Then those aligned with Heaven or Hell are also

included."

>
Uranus's eyes widened in surprise. "But I am--hmmm?! So... _you_

>are my soul-sister?" Uranus laughed. "That seems crazy."

>Immora's eyes were narrow slits of concentration. "Well, yes...
that could explain this unusual understanding between us... a

>soul-sibling, in the case of these energies, simply refers to
the connection with the Heavens that my soul taps into and that

>yours does. If you get right down to it, we are only
'soul-siblings' in the sense that the energies in our souls have

>origins in the Heavens, though mine also tap into the Hellish
realms too. So it's not like our destinies are fused or

>anything, that's what soulmates have, and besides, a
soul-sibling and a soulmate are different. We all have a

>soulmate somewhere, we just have to find them. Our soulmate is
the one we are destined to be with, forever. One that we will

>always love and be loved by in return. Most people never meet
there's, or if they do, they don't realize it. If the bond is

>exceptionally strong, it is very easy to recognize and
therefore, probably much deeper than others."

>
Uranus put both legs over her armrest and relaxed. "Hmmm... I

>think I have found my soulmate already," she said softly.

"It
sure does seem like it..."

>
"If you mean Michiru," Immora said with an amused tone, "I _do_

>
know of a spell that can determine things like that... relatively

>simple spell..." She closed her eyes and whispered a few words.
A soft glow formed around both her and Uranus. She opened her eyes with a grin. "Well, what do you know, the two of you _are_
soulmates."

>
"Wow," Uranus said in awe. I guess we really are meant to be

>together, she thought happily. If our souls are linked like
this, we have to be! "I am so glad to have someone like her...>that loves me like this... I love her so much... I wish everyone
could have a love as deep as ours." She sighed softly and asked

>suddenly, "Are you in love with someone?"
>Immora suddenly dropped her glass on the carpet, amazingly it
didn't crack. She smoothed her skirt as she stood up. "I do hope>the other Senshi will accept my apology. I never wanted to be
enemies."

>
Uranus grinned over at her, though was puzzled by the sudden

>change in subject. "Hey, they can learn to get used to you
'sister'."

>
Immora laughed. "I am not your sister in blood, but in spirit. >Not a true sister then," she commented. "But close enough. I
don't have a family, so I might as well call you mine."

>
Uranus looked at her with an amused look. "If all you mages are

>soul-siblings, then could you actually be soulmates too? Or
would it be 'incest' for soul-siblings to be together?"

>
Immora shrugged. "Not really. We aren't truly relatives.

>Besides," she said, dropping her voice, "relationships between
mages are usually very brief unless the two are soulmates... I... I

>should know," she said sadly. "Some mages... they actually will
use certain spells to make the person they love fall in love with

>them... Ka'ina did that to me. I broke the spell just today," she
sighed. "That's the problem with getting involved with another mage...>you never know if the attraction to them is real or if it's the result
of a spell. I was supposed to meet her at the Moon Kingdom today...>but I didn't. The meeting was supposed to be for us to... go out to
dinner, become closer... but I don't want to do that with her. I wish

>I had someone... like... well, I wish I had someone as close to me as you
and Michiru are. I used to have someone... if my fragmented memories are

>correct... but Ka'ina wiped those memories and..."
>"Let me guess, she sent this person away so you couldn't fall in love
again?"

>
"Yes..."

>
Uranus gave her a wry smile. "You'll meet again one day," she said softly.

>
Immora smiled sadly and stood up. "I hope so. I wish we could talk more,

>but I need to be going. I have to help Sharra with a spell--"

>"Was she that dark-skinned Elfin lady that appeared to retrieve
you yesterday?"

>
Immora nodded, then bowed at the waist. "Goodbye, Haruka, I

>shall see you some other time... ?"
>Uranus rose and walked her to the door. Just as Immora placed
her

delicate hand on the door handle, the door swung open.

>Immora stepped back as a tall, lanky man with dark hair and dark
colored robes entered. "Princess, I--" He blinked in surprise as

>he met Immora's gaze. He then bowed at the waist, an awed
expression on his face. "Immora. A pleasure to meet you."

>
Immora nodded and bowed politely. "And you are?"

>
"Zatuur. I have studied you for years, it is an honor to meet

>you face to face."

>Immora cocked and eyebrow and chuckled. "I didn't know there
was any written material about me. I'm not really that

>interesting!"

>Zatuur smiled and traced a strange symbol in the air. Immora
did the same, her finger leaving a blue glowing trail behind it,

>so the symbol shone in the air briefly before fading. She smiled
back at Uranus again before leaving the room, to go rest in some

>guest quarters.

>"What just happened?" Uranus asked in confusion.

>Zatuur laughed and handed her a scroll. "It was a gesture of welcome.
Here. This is from the Titaun family. Their son--"

>
"Let me guess, offers to take the throne, wants to know if I'll

>marry him?!"

>"Ah... yes. I'll just tell him no." Zatuur smiled slightly.
"Maybe you should make a general announcement that you are

>already... ah, in a relationship... and are not interested in
committing to another one."

>
Uranus shrugged and headed off to her room. What a weird day.

>

>
Time: about two hours later

>Place: a library, the Palace, the Moon Kingdom

>

>Mercury, Neptune, and Venus had gotten together to study. It
was pretty late at night and they only had candles to read by.

>Mercury skimmed over some science notes, Neptune glanced at her
math before becoming lost in a complicated daydream, while Venus

>struggled with her studies of the Uranian culture. "Too bad
Haruka isn't here," she muttered. "She could probably help me

>with this."

>"I just plain wish she was here," Neptune said with a little
sigh. Her hand trailed to a necklace around her neck with a rich

>blue stone on it. Mercury looked up at her and noted the
necklace. It looked to be expensive, and she had no idea what

>the stone was, but it was obviously real and extremely rare.

>"Where'd you get that necklace? It's beautiful," Mercury
commented. Venus promptly looked up to view the necklace.

>
Neptune blushed faintly. "Ah... Haruka gave it to me... about

three

>days ago..." She cleared her throat and opened up a book.

>Venus and Mercury both smiled slightly. Venus combed her golden
hair back, then irritably scratched the skin around the symbol

>on her forehead. "Are you okay?" Mercury asked with a puzzled
look.

>
Venus nodded and continued scratching her forehead. "It just

>itches like crazy... I don't know why..."

>She glanced around the library and noted a dark-haired woman
sitting alone in a corner with a haunted look on her face.

The

>door to the library slowly opened. The woman that entered was...
Immora? She was wearing a light blue, satin silk dress that hung

>to her ankles. No makeup adorned her face, making her look
strangely innocent and weak. A small silver necklace hung from

>her neck along with a few bracelets on her wrists. Her feet were
bare. Several candles went out around the room as she gestured

>with her hand. The corner the dark-haired woman sat in had only
one candle glowing, while the three Senshi had about five. They

>watched with interest as Immora sat down across from the other
woman and took a deep breath. "Hello, Ka'ina," she said. Her

>voice was soft and sad, unlike how'd they remembered it.

>"Hello, Immora," Ka'ina said bitterly.

>"Ka'ina, I... I am sorry I didn't show up... I just..." Immora looked
away. "I'm sorry. I just don't think that... Ka'ina, I broke through

>your spell... I'm sorry, but I don't love you. We can't stay together.
I'm sorry."

>
Ka'ina just looked at the floor and a single tear trailed down her face.

>"I still love you," she whispered. "I only put the spell on your because
of that." She fled the room before Immora could say anything else.

>
Immora sighed and sat back farther in her chair. She then

>glanced in the Senshi's direction. "Michiru?" she called softly.

>Neptune was surprised that Immora was using her real name.

"Ah...
yes?"

>
"I was on Uranus today. I spoke with Haruka... before I left the

>planet..." she walked over to her and held out a scroll. "She told
me to give this to you if I saw you."

>
Neptune put it in her bag. "Thank you..." she trailed off. Immora

>looked so weak and tired standing there in that pale slip dress,
with her blond hair falling down her back and around her

>shoulders. She was so pale, with very delicate, frail features,
the light of the candles dancing on her eyes...

>
Neptune's eyes widened. Her pupils... they were round? Weren't
>they slits before? What did it mean?

>As she watched, Immora's pupils slowly formed slits again. "Sleep

well," she whispered to the three before walking out the door
slowly
>and silently. She gently closed the door behind her.

>"Poor woman," Venus whispered. "She's so confused, she has
so
much pain to live with..."
>
Neptune sighed and pulled open the scroll and read it aloud to

>the other girls.

>" 'Dear Michiru',... that's all she can say? Dear?"

>"Keep going," Venus prodded. "Worry about it later."

>" 'Hello! I've been incredibly bored here on Uranus. Not much
has
happened since I last talked with you. Immora dropped by to
>chat and since she mentioned going back to the Moon Kingdom,
I
told her to give this to you.' Well, obviously, I mean, we just

>saw her," Neptune chuckled.

>" 'My mom isn't doing well. The doctor said she probably
won't
make it another day. She seems happy enough though. I
visited
>her, and she said that she was happy that she wouldn't have
to
feel the pain anymore. She said there was nothing left for her,

>so she was happy to be going on to a better place. I will
miss
her a lot. I never really got to know her. I wish she could
meet
>you. She told me she thinks you sound like a "very nice
young
lady, the type you wish your daughters could be just like".
She
>hopes we'll be happy together, and she said that she'll send
her
blessings from above when... if we get married.' Hmm... I
wonder..."
>Neptune giggled and kept reading. " 'I miss you already!
It
really hasn't been that long or anything, but I miss spending

>time with you. I hate being cooped up in the palace all day.
I
wish I could see you again. I'll probably be here over a month,

>but I'll come back the day of the ball and stay the night
before
I have to go back. It'll be nice to spend the whole night
together
>again, won't it? Just like old times, staying up late
talking,
getting barely any sleep because we spend so much time
making
>love..." Neptune coughed and blushed deeply while Mercury and

Venus just giggled.
>
"Well, well, Michiru," Venus teased. "I didn't know that you

>two were going that far!"

>Neptune blushed deeper and cleared her throat. "Minako... we are
deeply
in love and... we just... we are old enough to be...
engaging in those
>type of, um, activities..."

>"Why don't you keep reading?" Mercury suggested to spare Neptune
more
embarrassment.
>
Neptune opened her mouth to speak, then turned around and

>started looking around the room with a puzzled look on her face.

>"Are you okay?" Venus asked her, brow furrowed with concern.

>"I thought I sensed..." Neptune shuddered and pushed the thought
out of her head. Get a grip, Michiru! She's dead! We destroyed her!

>She can't be here... right?

>

>"And you want me to do this?"

>The shadowy form standing in her room nodded. "Yes. You are the
only one I know of with the power to--"

>
"What if I refuse?!" the woman snapped. "Just because I have_
the ability, doesn't mean I will agree to this...
thismadness_!!!"

>
The form seemed to coalesce into the shape of a woman with long, flowing hair, but still remained a shadow. "You tried to
kill all the people here yesterday. You could do it again."

>
"No!" the woman shouted hoarsely. "I am tired of it! I am too weak! My magic is still weakened!"

>"When you regain your power--"

>"NO!!!!" the woman screamed. A burst of blue light shot at the
shadowed form but only passed through her. The woman then crumpled on the floor sobbing. "I don't want to hurt them,
really I don't.... I..."

>"You really are weak, Immora. You are stupid and powerless, aren't you?" The form shimmered into nothing.

>Immora lay in a crumpled heap, sobbing to herself until she was
gasping for air. "I will never answer to you, Mistress Nine..."

>never..." she closed her eyes and slowly fell asleep. "Never."

>

> EIGHT

> _____

>

>Time: the next morning
Place: the Palace, the Moon Kingdom

>

>
Neptune stirred, and immediately upon awakening had the strangest sensation

>that something was very wrong in the Palace. She just couldn't figure what it
was.

>
She tied her bathrobe around her and went downstairs for breakfast. It was early in the morning, and only ten people were in the huge breakfast hall. A few
people in the Earth military, a man she recognized as a doctor from Uranus (why was he here_?), a giggling couple sitting off to the side, a Mercurian
translator, and Immora, who never noticed Neptune.

>
Neptune grabbed several food items and casually walked over to the Uranian

>doctor. He was busily typing into a keypad, a small communications crystal in
front of him. The ball showed a screen of writing, that was all that was there

>at the moment. He seemed frustrated and busy, Neptune didn't say anything in
case she might disturb him.

>
"Damn!" he swore. A face appeared in the ball. "I'm sorry," he told the woman

>that had appeared. "I can't do anything with these figures. Near as I can tell,
she's dying and we can't stop it. Tell her daughter." He broke off the

>communications and rested his forehead against his head, looking tired and
guilty.

>
"Who is it? The woman that's..."

>
"The queen," the doctor said. "The queen of Uranus is dying, and we'll probably

>lose her in the next ten minutes."

>

>Time: roughly the same
Place: the palace on Uranus

>

>
Uranus had been shaken awake, and after hastily throwing on some clothes, led

>to her mother's bedside, where the woman lay in her final minutes.

>"Mom!" she cried in a choked voice. She dropped to her knees next to the bed
and clasped her mother's hand. "Mom... I am sorry... I couldn't do anything..."

>
Her mother coughed and made a choked sound. "Darling, there isn't anything you

>could do to stop it. Let it go. We all die someday... some of us sooner than
others. Wipe your tears away, daughter, and stand proud! You have your whole

>life ahead of you! I've lived mine! I am going on to a greater place, you don't
need to stop that." She paused to cough softly.

>
Uranus smiled through her tears. "I love you, Mom. I really didn't get to spend

>much time with you... but you were always special to me... in those times I
remembered..."

>
Her mother smiled weakly. "Child, just be happy for me. I have lived in pain

>too long, I've needed a release. Now I have it. Your life is so good for you
now! Think about it dear. You have a woman that loves you dearly, that you also

>love, and you have friends that will stand by you. You have many things,
Haruka..." she coughed again. "Haruka, please, just be happy. Stay true to your

>friends, stay strong in your faith, and of course in your love."

>Uranus nodded, fighting back tears. "Farewell..."

>Her mother closed her eyes and leaned back farther in her pillows. "Goodbye,
Haruka... I love you daughter..." She gave a soft sigh and gave her last breath.

>
Uranus pushed the bangs back from her mother's face and kissed her forehead.

>She knelt down and said a small prayer, then opened the door where many people
gathered, waiting. "There is no more to be done here. The queen is dead." She

>turned and walked back to her room, then flung her windows opened and looked at
the sky. "If you can hear me now, Mother... thank you. For listening, for loving

>me... even if you couldn't be there in my childhood." She smiled up at the sky
sadly, then turned to the crystal to tell Queen Serenity what had happened.

>

>
Time: an hour later

>Place: the breakfast hall, the Palace, the Moon Kingdom

>

>The Inner Senshi, Saturn, Pluto, and Princess Serenity sat eating breakfast. A
lot of people were in the hall now, many still there from earlier. The young,

>giggling couple was still there, Immora still sat there, not really eating, but
she was sorting through papers, writing a report it seemed.

>
Saturn had just opened her mouth to speak, when Queen Serenity opened the doors

>and clapped her hands loudly. The hall fell silent. "I ask, please, for a moment
of quiet reflection. A life has been lost, the queen of Uranus, just an hour

>ago."

>The gatherers obliged and lowered their heads, thinking about what they'd
heard. Several people from Uranus were there, all remained in shock, silently

>praying for their late queen.

>Queen Serenity looked up. "You may continue," she said softly.

>Many people stayed quiet, the rest murmuring softly. Immora walked over to
Queen Serenity and handed her the sheets of paper. "Please read this," she said

>softly, before walking out of the hallway in a strange sort of trance.

>Neptune raced to her room and grabbed her communications crystal.

"Get me
through to the palace on Uranus--"

>
The woman on the other end responded, "The princess has asked not to be

>disturbed--"

>"Put me through to her!!!"

>"Ma'am, I am afraid that--"

>"I am her LOVER!!! Put me through to her!!"

>"Ah... yes, m-ma'am... hold on a moment..."

>Neptune sat impatiently waiting as the lady seemed to be searching for which
signal would reach Uranus's room. Finally Uranus's face appeared. She smiled

>weakly, sadly. "Hi Michiru..."

>"Hi Haruka... I... heard what happened. Do you want me to come over there? I
figured you probably want someone to talk to..."

>
"My shuttle leaves in three hours to return to the Moon Kingdom for the ball. I

>can only stay until tomorrow afternoon though; I will need to get back to my
duties... Mom's funeral is in five days..."

>
Neptune wiped a tear from her eye. "Haruka... I..."

>
Uranus smiled sadly at her. "There was nothing anyone could do for her... maybe

>some mage could've helped, but Mom wouldn't have wanted that. She wanted it to
end..." Uranus drew in a shuddered breath, the type you breathe after you've been

>crying hard for a long time. "I'm gonna miss her... she was the last family I had...
Lord knows where my brother is!" She smiled more

genuinely then. "Well, at least
>Mom is happy now... she always had a very strong faith... Her life
wasn't so great
so she wanted it to be over. I just have to
accept that."
>
Neptune blew her a small kiss. "I'm going back to Uranus with
you, okay? I miss
>you too much, and besides, it's easier to rule a planet with someone
by your
side."
>
Uranus laughed. "Thanks! Well, gotta get my dress from the
cleaning lady... I
>hope you'll like it. I picked it out for the ball, it's dark
blue..."

>"Don't tell me yet! I wanna be surprised!"

>"Suit yourself," Uranus chuckled. "Well... I should go... if I am
lucky, maybe I
can catch an earlier shuttle."
>
"Yeah, okay... Hey wait!" Neptune suddenly remembered...
"Haruka... I've been getting
>these strange feelings lately... like there is some evil presence in
the palace...
I'm scared, I really am. I don't know who to talk
to..."
>
Uranus thought about it. "Why not go to Mars? She is good with
this type of
>stuff..." there was a burst of static briefly on the screen and some
garbled
sounds, then Uranus appeared again. "Sorry! This thing
isn't working quite
>right... see ya later okay? I love you..."

>Neptune giggled as Uranus blew her a kiss and winked. "I love you
too" Blowing
her a kiss, she broke off the communications, then
flopped back on their bed and
>pondered the strange premonitions she'd been having lately.

>

>Time: about seven minutes after previous scene
Place: a guest
room, the Palace
>

>
"No!!! I told you NO!!!" Immora started throwing vases and
various strange
>objects, magic trinkets, and books at the shadowy form, before
stumbling to the
ground when she lost her footing. She looked back
up at the form of Mistress
>Nine with a sneer. "I won't ever serve you. I am not STUPID, unlike
what you
might think." She spat at the form. "Look at you, you
don't even have a body
>anymore! You're just a shadow, a mere presence!"

>Mistress Nine's black form was only a shadow of her former self. It
had the
shape, but the solid black shadow didn't betray any
features. A strange purple
>glow formed around her, and her eyes became visible as piercing
white slits on
her face, her irises only showing as a dark circle
in the white. A red glow
>formed from the eyes. "I will regain Hotaru, Immora, and then you
can't do
anything to stop me. You will help me whether you wish
it or not."
>
Immora climbed to her feet again. "You don't get it, do you? I
will NOT serve
>you, no matter what happens!!! And how the HELL are you able to
exist after
all the power the Senshi threw at you!?!"
>
Mistress Nine laughed lightly. "You fool! I am tied with many
powers in the

>
universe, linked to darkness. As long as there is evil in this world, I can
>return."
>Immora snorted. "Whatever. I really don't care anymore." Without any semblance
of modesty, she cast her clothing aside and pulled on a pale violet dress, slit
>up one side, with thin straps and a low neckline. "Now, I am going to ENJOY
myself and have fun. Don't interfere with that!"

>
Mistress Nine shimmered into a purple glow. "I go where I choose." She disappeared after that.
>Immora shrugged and applied rosy brown lipstick to her lips. I hate that woman,
she thought to herself, pulling her hair into a twist and sticking pins in it, a few pieces left out to frame her delicate-featured face. She won't control me, I
will never let anyone control me again, after what Necros did... Immora shuddered slightly, then turned around in front of the mirror to examine her
dress. She slipped her feet into pale violet high heels, then put silver hoops in her ears, a silver bracelet near her bicep (it's one of those Egyptian style
ones) and fastened a necklace around her neck. It had a rich blue gem, the variety unknown, but clearly rare [note: this is just like what Neptune was said
to have in the previous chapter; this was not given to her by Uranus though!] fastened on a silver chain. She held the jewel up in front of her face with a
wistful look, her pupils rounded. I will find you... one day we will be reunited, my love. I am sorry that Ka'ina removed the memories and I couldn't remember a
single thing about you, but I remember now... I know who you are now. I miss you so much! I don't know when, but we will be together again... my soulmate. I have
a strong feeling it will be soon...
A single tear trickled down her cheek, and Immora irritably dabbed her cheek with a cloth to get rid of the smear her eye makeup left behind it. I will find
you one day... we will be together... forever...

>
>
Time: half an hour later
>Place: a meeting room in the Palace
>
>Queen Serenity was discussing the report Immora had given her with several
generals, Kunzite, Jadeite, Zoisite, and Nephrite among them. She had made it clear that Mistress Nine was still in existence and was trying to utilize
Immora's powers, and to regain possession of Hotaru.

>
Kunzite paced the floor while Nephrite spoke with the other two, the other generals present murmuring amongst themselves. "I think that if she plans to
attack," a general from Jupiter spoke, "we need to build up everyone's defenses in preparation."
>A voice spoke out, "That is just what she is waiting for." A person materialized
from the shadows. Immora. She was dressed for the ball, it seemed. "Look, she will wait until she knows we are ready for her to attack. She is strange

in that sense...
she wants to wait until... until my powers are built up again. She seems to think
>I will assist her."
>A Martian commander narrowed his eyes in her direction. "Will you assist her,
archmage? You tried to attack us two days ago! Why not now?!"
>
A typically fiery-tempered Martian, Immora thought to herself. "No, I will not.
>Oh, General, if you were paying attention to the broadcasts lately, I did _not_
attack of my own free will. I believe you can study that report in detail if you
>wish to understand my unique mental condition fully."
>She then curtsied slightly. "If you will excuse me, the ball is in two hours,
and I need to speak with some people. Farewell Queen, gentlemen."
>
"She has a strange charm to her," Zoisite murmured.
>
"If you have a heart of ice," Jadeite chuckled.
>
>
Time: an hour and a half later
>Place: the docking bay, outside the Palace
>
>The Senshi stood waiting for Uranus's shuttle to arrive, along with a few dozen
Uranian citizens that wanted a glimpse of their princess. Some of the guests had
>filed outside to see who all would get off the shuttle--it held about a hundred
people--along with the well-known gossipers, fishing for stories to broadcast
>over a general channel the next morning.
>Neptune stood with the Inner Senshi, the four Generals, and Endymion. The
Generals and Endymion had their arms wrapped around the shoulders of their
>respective lovers, while Neptune stood off to the side. Pluto and Saturn were
talking with an old friend of theirs several yards away. Neptune smoothed the
>front of her dress, a silvery aqua in color. The dress hugged her upper body
while the skirt billowed around her, the low dip of the neckline and the loose,
>transparent sleeves complimented her shapely figure well. Her heels matched the
color of her dress, and she wore simple droplet earrings, the ring and necklace
>Uranus had given her, and a thin silver chain bracelet around her left wrist.
She only wore a bit of rosy lipstick as her makeup. Like the other Princesses,
>she wore a thin ribbon tied in the back around her neck. Her wavy hair was worn
down, curling around her shoulders slightly.
>
The Inners were dressed with equal elegance. Princess Serenity had her usual,
>beautiful white dress, white heels, the engagement ring Endymion had given her,
and some simple silver jewelry, with pale pink lipstick as her only makeup. She
>was a vision of angelic beauty in her soft white and silver tones. She had tied
a silvery white ribbon around her neck which complimented her eyes and hair
>well. A few small white flowers were tucked into her hair near her odango.
>Mercury had on a short blue-toned dress, the color shifting from rich blues to aqua
tones depending on the angle you looked at it. The neckline dipped but was
>modest at the same time, her sleeves thin spaghetti straps. Her

dress was
flowing like water, her silver jewelry seeming to reflect the watery hues. The >ribbon around her neck shifted colors with her dress, her silver hoop earrings
and bracelets appearing blue toned in comparison, her lips glossed to a delicate >shine.
>Venus had a yellow dress on that had a gold tinge to it. Her v-neckline didn't
dip very low, the slit up one side of her skirt showed her legs, the skirt and >top clinging to her lithe form. Her shiny hair was worn loose instead of in its
usual ribbon, matching her gold droplet earrings and bracelets well. The ribbon >was the same color as her dress, though she tied it at the side of her neck instead
of the back, her bronzy lips completing the color scheme.

>
Mars wore a rich red dress so as not to match her bright hair color exactly.

>Her dress clung to her before flaring around her knees, her thin straps worn low
on her shoulders with her plunging neckline showing her tanned skin. Her hair >was pinned up in a twist, with several pieces dangling loose. Her ruby jewelry
was set in gold, the ribbon around her neck had a slight curl in the tails. She >smiled briefly in Serenity's direction as her rosy lips kissed Jadeite's cheek
briefly.

>
Jupiter wore an emerald-toned dress, loose and billowing around her, with a low >neckline and transparent sleeves like the one's on Neptune's dress. Her wavy
locks were pulled back in a low ponytail with a ribbon like the one around her >neck. She wore only rose earrings for jewelry, but they were so polished and
bright that it didn't seem necessary for her to wear any more. Her lips were a >glossy pink, going well with the rose earrings.
>Pluto wore a black dress with a plunging neckline and thin straps. It clung to
her body, flaring only at her ankles, her dark hair pulled up in a high ponytail >held with a silver hair-ring. Dark jewels sparkled from her ears, a dark ribbon
tied around her neck seeming a bit out of place, but she looked strangely >imposing nevertheless. A bracelet made of silver wrapped here upper arm (again
one of those Egyptian ones, you know, those snake bracelets?) She didn't smile >but only briefly, a slight twitching of her deep chocolate-colored lips.
>Saturn wore a purple dress with a modest neckline and off-shoulder sleeves. The
dress was loose around her tiny frame and she seemed uncomfortable standing >around in it. She wore tiny silver hoops for earrings, her only jewelry, her
lips glossed slightly, and the ribbon tied around her neck matching her dress in >color. She seemed a bit nervous though. I have a terrible feeling about tonight,
Saturn thought to herself. Something is terribly wrong, I know it...
>Usagi stood to the side of Saturn, wearing a silvery pink dress that was simple >in design; low neckline, strappy sleeves, tight on the top while becoming looser
and flared towards the bottom. She wore her hair down, flowing in soft waves, >with some small white flowers tucked behind her left ear. She wore

tiny silver^{
}droplets for earrings, with a silvery pink ribbon tied around her neck, and a
>small silver chain around her wrist with a heart dangling from it.
Pluto was^{
}surprised at how much more mature she was than in the Original Time, and was
>pleased that she had grown into such an intelligent, calm woman.^{
}

>The Generals wore black tuxedos with flowing cloaks, the inside lining of Kunzite's ^{
}being an icy blue, Jadeite's a dark red, Nephrite's a rich green, and Zoisite's a
>deep golden orange. Endymion wore his usual black tuxedo with a flowing black cloak, ^{
}the inside lined with a rich red velvet.

>
As the group stood, Pluto and Saturn rejoined them. The shuttle finally landed,
>about ten minutes late, but that was to be expected with the strange magical^{
}waves that Immora and Saturn's battle had caused.
Passengers started filing off
>the shuttle, side-by-side, in a long trail of people. Several well-known^{
}families exited the plane, their arrivals announced as they left the ramp.
>
Uranus was near the back of the group and seemed a bit upset about being so far
>behind everyone. A big fuss was made by the announcer at her arrival, the group^{
}waiting for her ignoring what they said.

>
"Haruka!" Neptune called out, waving her hand over the large crowd of people.
>
Uranus waved back and started pushing people aside to get through, "'Scuse me,
>pardon me, hey! Watch where you're going!" She finally got through the crowd.^{
}"Jeez, it's a zoo out here!" she chuckled.

>
Neptune smiled and ran into her open arms, hugging her tightly.
"How was the
>trip?" Jupiter asked.^{
}
>Uranus nodded, "It was okay, some rough space, but it was a pretty smooth^{
}trip--oof! You're squishing my ribs, Michiru!"

>
Neptune giggled and kissed her lips lightly. She pulled back from the embrace
>and breathed, "You look gorgeous."^{
}
>Uranus blushed slightly. "Thanks, you do too." Uranus wore an indigo dress that^{
}fitted her slender body tightly. It had a dipping neckline with two tiny straps
>on each sides for sleeves. The skirt was slit to just above her knee on each^{
}side. She wore a gold chain with a tiny globe-shaped gem on it, a rich dark blue
>with flecks of aquamarine swirling in it. It was a gift from Neptune. She wore a small gold hoop on each ear, her lips colored in a rosy brown. The ribbon
>matching her dress tied around her neck had very short tails on it. She kissed^{
}Neptune on the forehead. "Like the dress?"
>
"Yes, it's very nice," Neptune said with a smile.
>
"C'mon, let's get away from the crowds, the ball starts in twenty minutes... it's
>going to be tough getting inside," Mars told them all.^{
}
>"We better get inside then," Endymion said with a smile. "After all, the 'royal^{
}couples' have to be announced." The couples all groaned. "Pluto, Saturn, and

>Usagi, you three will each get separate introductions..."

>"Why do we have to be announced?" Serenity said with a sigh.

>"We are royalty, important people, rulers, Senshi..." Mercury shrugged. "We have
to get used to it. These people look to us for protection and leadership. They

>expect us to be announced and talked about--" she laughed, "I'll stop rattling
on... probably is a rather boring topic, right?"

>
The couples joined hands as they walked to the front of a line of important

>people that would be introduced, the three singles also coming in behind them.

>"Oh, sorry! I didn't mean to bump you--" Saturn started to someone she'd
jostled.

>
"It's okay I wasn't--Saturn?!" The woman's eyes widened in surprise.

>
"Immora?!" Saturn was completely shocked, but she tried not to make too big a

>deal about it.

>Immora cringed. "Er, hi... I... Saturn, I am so sorry for... attacking like
that... I..."

>
Saturn's shocked face changed to a wide smile. "Uranus explained it in a

>transmission to me last night. I understand. I... forgive you."

>Immora breathed a sigh of relief. "Y'know... I _hate_ waiting in this stupid
line!" She laughed lightly. "I don't consider myself important, so why should I

>be here?! I mean, tons of mages look up to me and everything, but I'm really
just some simple woman who wishes she had a _normal_ life! I'm sure you can

>understand that, being a senshi and all, can't you? Being popular really _sucks_
sometimes."

>
She laughed with Saturn, then they exchanged several words, complimented their

>choice of dress, and stood talking as they waited to be introduced.

>"Welcome to the annual Silver Millennium Ball! I hope the trip was okay--" the
usual speech by the announcer followed. "First, we have our dear queen, the

>beautiful Serenity!" There was an uproarious applause after that, Queen Serenity
entering the room with her usual grace, smiling as she took her seat at a large

>table reserved for the Senshi and the Generals (Endymion too!)

>"Princess Serenity of the moon and her fiancÃ©, Prince Endymion of Earth!" The
young engaged couple walked it with Serenity's hand around Endymion's arm. They

>politely nodded and took their seats.

>"Princess Mercury and her boyfriend, General Kunzite!" The two entered and
smiled to everyone, Kunzite returning several salutes he received from various

>members of his forces.

>"Princess Venus and her boyfriend, General Zoisite!" There were several
whistles, just who they were directed to was not apparent. They waved before

>taking their seats.

>"Princess Mars and her boyfriend, General Jadeite!" They walked in

and briefly
waved before slipping into their seats.

>
The announcer paused slightly. "Princess Jupiter and her
_fiancÃ© General

>Nephrite!" They hurried to their seats as scattered shouts and
whistles flew at
them, the Senshi all staring in astonishment at
them.

>
"When did THIS happen!?" Serenity squealed.

>
"Hush, last night, now be quiet," Jupiter hissed.

>
"Princess Uranus and... *ahem* her girlfriend Princess Neptune!"
They walked in
>holding hands and smiling widely, receiving various responses as
they took their
seats.

>
"Princess Pluto, Princess Saturn, and the beautiful, kind, and
mysterious woman

>known as Usagi!" The three women entered, curtsied, then took their
seats.

>"Um..." the announcer was uncertain about announcing the next person
on the list.
"The most powerful archmage in known existence,
Immora!" Immora entered with a

>tiny forced smile, the only true applause being from some mages
clustered
together, the rest was out of politeness. She sat down
at a large table where

>most of the mages sat, a strangely crestfallen look on her face.

>The introductions continued for a bit as some other important
persons and
families were announced. "General Toren of Uranus with
his wife..." Uranus held

>back a loud laugh as his name was called.

>"The King and Queen of Neptune, with their daughters and sons..."
the announcer
racked off several names as Neptune paled slightly.

>
The announcer continued announcing the royal families of the
various planets,

>the kings and queens receiving less applause than their sons and
daughters
however.

>
"... one who has been known to us as one of the fastest runners
and best shuttle

>pilot around, Akeru!"

>A loud crack of glass was heard from one of the tables and most of
the guests
fell silent and turned to see Immora, shards of glass
held in her trembling,

>bleeding hand. The eyes went back to the woman introduced as Akeru,
shrugging as
they clapped for her.

>
Akeru had average skin-tone, short, boyish-cut black hair, and
almond-shaped,

>chocolate brown eyes. She was average height, slender, and carried
herself with
confidence. Like most of the men present and only a
couple women, she wore a

>tuxedo, pale in color but not quite white, looking strangely right
in it. She
wore a silver chain around her neck, with a rich blue
gem attached [notice a

>patter here?] She took her seat at the table filled with mages,
choosing an
empty spot next to Immora.

>
The introductions finished shortly after that. Uranus nudged
Jupiter with her

>elbow. "Hey, you have any idea what is going on over there? I don't
know what to
make of it..."

>
Jupiter followed her gaze to where the mages sat, the other
Senshi also

>starting to take interest. Immora sat, wide-eyed, and said nothing as she gazed
at Akeru, tightly clasping the jewel around her neck. Akeru looked over at her
>with a bemused look. The Senshi used their magical abilities to hear what they
said.

>
"Do you remember me, Immora?" she spoke in sweet tones.

>
Immora nodded slowly. "I think so..." Akeru cupped Immora's chin with her hand.

>Immora colored slightly. "I've missed you... I am so sorry for what happened..."

>Akeru just smiled and kissed her cheek gently. "It isn't your fault... Ka'ina
made you forget and sent me here..."

>
A tiny tear trickled down Immora's cheek. Akeru brushed it away, Immora

>catching Akeru's hand in hers when she pulled it back, and gently kissed the
other woman's hand. Akeru smiled at her and Immora smiled shyly back.

>
"Poor Ka'ina," Venus said softly, gesturing to the crestfallen woman sitting a

>several seats away from Immora and Akeru. "It's kind of obvious what Akeru and
Immora feel for each other... Immora has a love for Akeru that she never had for

>Ka'ina..."

>Music started playing and couples started to file out to the dance floor.

>"May I have this dance?" Endymion teased Serenity, pulling her to her feet as
the two began twirling and moving across the dance floor with practiced skill.

>
Uranus smiled to Neptune and they stood, also moving to the dance floor.

>"Remember that day in the cave?"

>Neptune blushed faintly, then gently pressed her lips to Uranus's. "How could I
forget... my first kiss, or should I say two, ever. And they were _quite_ good,

>Haruka."

>Uranus laughed with her, holding her close as they moved in time with the
music.

>
The Generals helped their respective lovers to their feet as they moved out to

>the floor also. Venus kept hissing questions in Jupiter's direction, as did
Zoisite, demanding an explanation as to just how their engagement came about.

>
Queen Serenity sat at the table with Pluto, Saturn, and Usagi. "They all make

>such beautiful couples," she commented.

>Pluto nodded in agreement. "They do all go well together... hmmmm, what _is_ our
friend Immora up to?"

>
They looked over in her direction. She was talking softly with Akeru, nervously

>clasping her hand. Akeru then asked her something and they stood up. Akeru
started to lead her in the dance, moving among the dancers a bit awkwardly, as

>if not used to dancing much. Immora's cheeks were flushed slightly as they held
each other tightly.

>
"Akeru, I ... I love you. I am sorry that Ka'ina... you know..."

>
"Hush, my love..." Akeru whispered, pressing her finger to Immora's soft lips.

>"I love you too..." They leaned closer, meeting each other's lips in

a tender, yet
passionate kiss. A few murmurs escaped some of the people dancing near them, the

>couple never even noticing in their embrace. Akeru pulled back slowly. "I missed
you," she told Immora softly.

>
Immora blushed slightly and said shyly, "I really missed you too... once I

>remembered you..."

>Serenity chuckled, "Despite having lived for technically hundreds, maybe thousands
of years, she still is young at heart."

>
The various couples continued to whirl around the dance floor as the band

>shifted to a slower song. Endymion held Princess Serenity tighter to him as he
talked softly with her. "When do you want our wedding to be? We've been engaged

>for awhile now..."

>"Hmmm... let's think about that later and just enjoy the party for now..."

>Pluto smiled to Saturn. "They are a lovely couple aren't th--" her words cut off
as her eyes went blank.

>
"Pluto, wha--" Saturn gasped for air, her eyes blanking out. Her world seemed to

>swirl around her, she felt light-headed like she was floating, yet strangely
heavy... everything was spinning, she was numbed, but a sharp pain ached through

>her body... everything seemed so silent, but a voice throbbed in her mind... her
thoughts were mixing, jumbling, hers and someone else's, she could feel part of

>her body clearly while the other seemed to be feeling what another person felt...

>Queen Serenity dashed to Saturn's side, the Senshi quickly breaking away from
their dances to run over to here. Saturn had collapsed on the ground shrieking, a

>black shadow shaped like a woman hovering over her, but seeming to overlap her...

>The crowd started screaming and panicking, shoving aside their peers in a dash
for the exits. Guards swarmed around trying to get things under control. Queen

>Serenity started shouting at the Senshi, "Transform! It's Mistress Nine, you
must stop her!"

>
The Senshi all clutched their heads simultaneously as a pulsing sensation went

>through their minds. "I am afraid NOT," Mistress Nine cackled.

Saturn's body
raised, eyes still blank. About half of Mistress Nine's form was merged with

>Saturn's. Saturn's body seemed like a puppet, suspended in the air, unable to
control her own actions. Mistress Nine sent out a wave of energy that rippled

>the air and slammed into the Senshi, it didn't knock them back or hurt them
physically, but had another effect...

>
"I-I can't henshin--" Mercury moaned. "My head..."

>
"That power.. it's too strong, stop fighting it!" Uranus called hoarsely to

>them. "The harder you try the more it AHHHH!!!" she slumped to her knees
clutching her throbbing head in her hands.

>
Purple lighting crackled in the air as Mistress Nine slowly merged with

>Hotaru's body. "STOP HER!!!" someone else screamed.

>A burst of light hit Mistress Nine's shadowy form and she was forced back a
bit. "What the--"

>
Immora stood there with a terrified look on her face. "D-Don't do it please!

>You told me you wouldn't... You don't know what--" a burst of black energy from
Mistress Nine slammed Immora back against the wall. A crack split the wall as

>the crunch of bones was heard. Immora still remained pinned to the wall as
Mistress Nine continued to pour black energy from her, slamming into the

>screaming archmage's form. Finally the onslaught stopped. Immora dropped to the
ground with a sickening thump. Akeru screamed loudly and ran over to her

>crumpled, bloodied figure.

>"The ginzuishou! Give it to me!" Queen Serenity shouted, fighting against the
pain of the black energy crackling around her. The guests had cleared the hall,

>leaving the queen, the Senshi, Immora, Akeru, and Mistress Nine the only ones
present.

>
The younger Serenity painfully lobbed it to her mother, who clasped it in her

>hand with fierce determination. A strong wind blew outwards from Mistress Nine,
pushing them back away from her as she continued to merge with Hotaru's body.

>
Uranus painfully crawled over to Akeru, who was slumped over the form of Immora.

>Immora's breathing was ragged and her healing was going painfully slow. "You
have to help us!" Uranus shrieked. "Get up! Get up and fight!"

>
"I can't!" she sobbed, clutching her broken ribs. Sobs racked her body, making

>the pain worse. "I-I-I wish I c-could but... ahhhh!" she screamed as a glow rushed
through her. Blood stained her hands as she held them in front of her face,

>shudders racking her. "I can't d-do anything against her...

I-I..."

>"Don't push her!" Akeru whispered hoarsely. A burst of light caused the Senshi
to slide across the floor towards the walls.

>
Pluto finally came to, weakened and in terrible pain. She couldn't access her

>time abilities. She watched in horror as Mistress Nine started to complete her
possession.

>
"Immora!" Queen Serenity screamed.

>
"Use the gin-ginzui--" Immora started to say. She coughed hard and spat out some

>blood.

>Queen Serenity held it up and a bright white light began to glow. "Ginzuishou
Clen--" she never finished her words. A bright purple flash suddenly appeared,

>and everything was colored red as a red glow formed, finally turning black. They
couldn't see what was happening...

>
A dull purple light, shaped light a small star, appeared. Then red glowing

>eyes. Everything lit up again. "NoOOOooooOOOoooOOOoooooOOO!!!" Immora shrieked.

>Loud maniacal laughter filled the hallway. Standing tall, wearing a low-cut
navy dress with long black hair, yet the same frail form they knew, was Mistress

>Nine. "I knew I would have this body again... nothing can ever stop me..."

>"Pluto Senshi MAKE-UP!!!" Pluto shrieked, ignoring the fire in her

mind. She
stood up, clothed in her fuku. The pain in her head made her want to pass out,

>but she had to keep going...

>"Mars Senshi MAKE-UP!!!"

>"Uranus Senshi MAKE-UP!!!"

>"Jupiter Senshi MAKE-UP!!!!"

>"Venus Senshi MAKE-UP!!!!"

>"Neptune Senshi MAKE-UP!!!!"

>"Mercury Senshi MAKE-UP!!!!"

>"Moon Prism Power, Make-UP!!!!!!"

>The Senshi transformed and stood up, clutching their respective weapons in
hand. Mistress Nine laughed loudly. The two Serenities clung together, trying to power the ginzuishou, which refused to answer their summons.

>"Blazing --" Mars started her attack, when Mistress Nine sent another ripple of
energy out. The Senshi screamed as they slid across the marble floor to collide

>with the wall. Mars moaned and started to try again, when a burst of energy hit
her hard, knocking her unconscious before she could cry out.

>
"Try something else, summon your elements or something!" Akeru cried to them.

>She held Immora against her, her pale tuxedo dotted with Immora's crimson blood.

>Immora moaned and rasped, "Just summon them! Don't worry about the words *cough
cough* just do it!!"

>
Neptune nervously started, "I summon the spirits of the sea--" Mistress Nine's

>form seemed to waver and glowed brightly. Neptune cried out and screamed,
knocked unconscious like Mars.

>
"Damnit, it isn't responding!" Princess Serenity cried. The ginzuishou remained

>dull and lifeless.

>"I summon the guardians of the heavens--" Uranus also screamed was also knocked
out by a blast.

>
"We are never going to win this," Neo-Moon sobbed. "Everytime we try she just--"

>
"Wait!" Akeru cried. "Immora... give me the rings..."

>
"What?!" Immora gasped. "Akeru, you can't--"

>
"Do it!"

>
Immora handed over several rings to her, each having a different colored gem set

>in them. Akeru grimaced slightly at the flow of energy that went through her,
then turned to face Mistress Nine. Several bolts of lightning, followed by a flow

>of fire and ice, launched at the other woman. Mistress Nine sidestepped them,
then lashed out, knocking the rings from her fingers.

>
"Damn!" Akeru swore. "I can't use those abilities without the amplifier rings--"

>
"Death..." Mistress Nine started in a chill voice.

>
Pluto's eyes widened to their fullest. "no, No, NO SOMEONE STOP HER!!!!"

>
Immora cried out hastily, "I Summon the energy of the Cosmos to me--"

>
"Reborn..."

>
">--and call you to fill me with your power!!!"

>
"Revo--"

>
"Katanu shali tai Na!!!!" Immora shrieked.

>
"--LUTION!!!!"

>
A bright white burst of light formed, matched by a burst of black light. The

>two smashed together, the sound of a gigantic thunderclap shattered the air as a blinding light formed. Screams echoed in the air as a rush of intense cold

>poured from the blast, seeming about to freeze everything in the bright glow, when suddenly it all ceased.

>
The Senshi that were still conscious huddled together as they sobbed with fear,

>then sniffled slightly and looked around.

>Saturn lay on the ground, her skin almost deathly white. Her body had returned to normal. Immora lay, not breathing, on the ground next to her. Their dresses

>were torn and clung in pathetic scraps to them, scratches and small burns marking their pale skin.

>
The scream from Akeru brought them to their senses.

>
They stumbled over their feet, moving as quickly as they could to Saturn and

>Immora's side. "Oh God no please no oh my God..." Mercury was murmuring to herself. She lay her head to Saturn's chest, fearing the worst. "Oh thank God,

>her heart is beating... faintly though... she's not breathing..."

>She inwardly grimaced. If she had to resort to mouth-to-mouth... Akeru handed her a vial of smelling salts. "It might work... get her breathing first..."

>
Neo-Moon stumbled forward and said some strange phrase under her breath. A pink

>light glowed around Saturn and she drew in a shuddered breath, then another.
Mercury briefly waved the vial under Saturn's nose. She coughed and her eyes

>fluttered open. She started to sit up, but Jupiter held her shoulders, keeping her in place, then gently gathered her into her arms, cradling the frail

>princess. Saturn started sobbing. "Oh God I hurt all over... I feel so horrible...
check on her..." she whispered, then passed out, but she breathed regularly.

>Jupiter gently handed her limp form to Pluto.

>Akeru was frantically trying to rouse Immora. Immora lay still on the ground, still not breathing. Mercury checked her. "She barely has a pulse... we might

>loose her..."

>"She's IMMORTAL damnit!" Akeru screamed. "She won't die! It's not possible for her to! Just wake her up please!!!!" She drew in a shuddered breath. "I-I... I'm sorry,

>I just..." She calmed down a bit and started taking deep breaths.

>"We have to get her breathing again... give her mouth-to-mouth please," Mercury said. "I don't think anyone else is willing to."

>
Akeru nodded and pinched Immora's nose tightly shut, held her jaw firmly and

>covered her mouth with her own. She breathed in several times, then pulled back and pressed her hands to her torso, pushing in a few times.

>
The waited several moments. "Damn!" Akeru repeated the procedure. She then

>repeated again... Finally Immora started to breathe again.

>"She's still unconscious," Venus murmured wearily. "And Mars, Nep--"

>"Call the doctors," Queen Serenity murmured to them, slumped against the wall.
"Summon them, someone..."

>
A few minutes later, the doctors showed up, putting the five patients on stretchers and carefully teleporting them to the medical facilities.

>

>Time: two hours later
Place: the medical facilities, the Palace

>

>
The Senshi, Akeru, and Queen Serenity waited outside the door nervously until

>the doctor let them come in.

>Mars, Uranus, and Neptune lay on small beds pushed near each other. "They
should be okay in a few days," the doctor told them.

"Conscious by tomorrow, but

>they will need to rest a few days. Calling upon their elements like that and
having the link so suddenly severed... it may damage their abilities for a couple

>of weeks. But they will be physically and mentally well within three days at the
most."

>
The doctor handed some medical reports to Mercury, who scanned through them

>briefly, planning to read through them later. "Saturn... I am afraid I do not know
when she will be well. There is no way to tell yet if Mistress Nine is still

>within her. I am afraid we will have to keep her in unconscious until we are
able to determine if Mistress Nine still possesses her. Also, she might be

>damaged mentally by the attack... I will explain more momentarily.. We have been
able to cure most of her wounds already, so when we are able to wake her up, she

>should be in full health."

>The Senshi nodded to him. Queen Serenity sadly gazed upon Saturn, lying with
the sheets pulled up to her neck. They had removed the shreds of her dress, as

>they'd done with Immora, because they had gotten in the way during the surgery.
Though they had appeared to be not seriously injured on the outside, there had

>been some internal bleeding in both that the doctors had to stop.

>The doctor handed the medical documents on Saturn to Mercury, then drew their
attention to Immora. "I am afraid she has fallen into a coma. We tried to...ah,

>jump-start her usual magical healing process with a small dose of this," he held
up a vial of a strange liquid, "but we got no response--"

>
"What do you mean?!" Akeru interrupted. "If her magic abilities are working

>they would have started to heal... oh no..." her hand flew to her mouth.

>The doctor nodded. "As you all might recall, her abilities were weakened by her
battle with Saturn--not permanently, but they probably would not have raised back

>to full potential for a number of days. What Immora did earlier today..." he
cleared his throat. "Mistress Nine called upon a

power that would have ultimately
>destroyed _everything_. I don't mean just this planet, this solar system... the
power she called upon would have reached across possibly hundreds or thousands of
>galaxies. Immora did a very... _stupid_ thing... she basically called upon a power
that would have basically done the exact opposite of that. When the two energies
>collided, that huge explosion you felt was formed. It did not just burst and
disappear. That same explosion is still traveling... it's probably left our solar
>system by now... What I am getting at is that Immora used a power, a very great
power, that she should not have attempted even in her full power, much less her
>weakened state. She is lucky she is immortal or she would undoubtedly be dead
already. Using that much power would kill anyone _except_ for an immortal, and as
>it is she probably will be in a coma for a long time."

>Akeru seemed to be frozen in place. "How long until she can be woken up?"

>"At the least..." the doctor sighed deeply. "It could be several months before
she wakes up, and maybe even more time after that before she is able to even
>_think_ on her own again."

>Jupiter steadied Akeru as she slumped over towards the ground, crying hard.

>"oh God!" Pluto whispered. "If it had this effect on her, how could Saturn... ?"

>"Saturn is a unique case, she already had the potential for that kind of attack
in her. Immora did not have that ability. The chant she cried out, the summon
>she made... she drew in power from _everything_, and then suddenly released it in
that one burst. Normally, if she were to attempt that, she would have to build
>up the energy for months... but to do it in a matter of seconds..."

>Pluto leaned wearily on her Time Staff. Saturn and Immora... comatose... Saturn
likely to still be possessed, they didn't dare risk waking her... Immora in a coma
>for who knows how long.... Mistress Nine could escape anytime and attack.

>A small tear escaped her eye. All I've tried to do in my duty is to keep the
natural balance of this reality. I failed in the last one, and this new reality
>was formed. This one has plunged into a chaos that I can't do anything to
prevent. Things are happening that shouldn't happen, and I can't do anything to
>stop it.

>I have failed.

>*****
END ENCOUNTERS ~~~ NEXT: REMEMBRANCE

4. Remembrance

~~SILVERMOON~~
> Remembrance
 Nine through Ten
> a Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon fanfiction by Immora

> _____

>Please see the author's notes in Resurrection for all copyright

information.

>
I apologize for the awful line-wrapping.

>

>

> NINE

> _____

>

>Time: about eight months later
Place: the medical facilities, the Palace

>

>
The Senshi and Generals had gathered to check up on Saturn's condition. The frail

>girl lay in the bed, looking tiny and paler than ever. She hadn't been allowed to wake up
yet. "Poor thing," Jupiter whispered. She clasped Nephrite's hand tightly with the one she

>wore the wedding ring he'd given her. Princess Serenity leaned against Endymion for support.
"She's missed so much... our wedding, the Prince and Princess's wedding..."

>
Mars quietly turned on a viewing crystal, selecting a signal that delivered news.

>She turned the volume low and paid scant attention to it.

>"--and in other news today, Queen Serenity signed a treaty with Earth. The two will
provide military support to other planets--"

>
"They don't dare let her wake up," Jupiter commented, then turned to look over at

>Immora, where a doctor was monitoring her. "And Immora, she won't wake up because of
using that attack... she saved us all and look at what she got in return!"

>
Akeru silently entered the room, combing her fingers through her black hair that had

>grown to just past her cheekbones. "Anything happen yet?" she murmured. Her question was
met with sad no's. The Senshi slowly walked out of the room with sad eyes as Akeru sat

>down on the chair next to Immora's bed and watched the viewing crystal.

>"--Princess Hotaru of Saturn remains in a coma to prevent Mistress Nine from taking
control. Immora is also in a coma still. Well, it's that time of year again! The annual

>harvest on Jupiter has been a success so far..."

>

>... I hear their voices, but I cannot speak. My mind is working a bit, but they don't seem
to notice. What is going on? My memories are fluctuating... who am I? I see a face in my

>mind... long blond hair and blue eyes, that's me... and another woman... short black hair and
brown eyes... my lover... the names escape me though. The details are missing. What is my

>past? What is my present? Why can't I escape this empty void, alone with my dreary thoughts.
I want to open my eyes, and call out to these people, but I can't feel my body to make it

>move.

>Everything is blank again, then I see... faces... memories of faces actually... people I
can remember but cannot place... my parents, a brother, other relatives... friends, teachers,

>rivals... then stranger memories... a man with long white hair and a sneer, a woman with
chin-length auburn hair and a smug face, a sea of pale, sad faces, then a dark skinned elf

>maiden with long purple hair. Who are these people, these faces?

Really... I know what they
stand for but what are their names, how did I meet these people, just what _do_ they mean
>to me? Then I see Her face again... always it goes back to hers, her smile, her laugh, her
voice, her touch, everything about her replays itself in my mind.

>
How long has it been like this? Me alone in this black void, with only these strange

>fragmented memories? When can I finally return to the blue skies and green land again? When
will I feel the magic course through my blood, or the joy of just being alive, or the
>gentle touch of her kiss? ...

>

>.... Akeru brushed a strand of hair away from Immora's face and wiped away a tear,
surprised to see tiny tears gathering at the corners of Immora's eyes. What the---she

>glanced at a monitor near by. Hmm... some brain activity, at least there was some thought
going on, but she hadn't so much as twitched in the past several months.

>
Akeru sat back and hugged her knees to her chest, as the lights were shut off for

>the night. The only light now was from the medical equipment around the patients, and the
dull sparkle of tears in the darkness.

>

>
Time: the next morning

>Place: the medical facilities, the palace

>

>Pluto gently shook Akeru awake. She'd fallen asleep in the chair next to Immora's
bed again. Akeru groaned and blinked several times, rubbing the sleep from her eyes. Pluto

>noted the streaks on her face, perhaps from crying?

>She turned to look at the monitor readouts. Hmm... "She definitely has brain activity
going on... it doesn't seem to be conscious thought, it's more like... as if her mind is merely

>playing out images and thoughts for her that she has no control over." She rested her chin
in her hand as she studied the data some more. "She still isn't conscious, hasn't been

>conscious... have you noticed anything unusual?"

>Akeru stretched and smoothed the front of her shirt. "Before I fell asleep I noticed
tears gathering around her eyes. I have no idea why that would happen or how."

>
Pluto nodded and pulled a chair up, glancing over to the chairs against the walls

>where the other Senshi had fallen asleep after the Generals left.

>Pluto got up to read Saturn's monitor. No brain activity what-so-ever. That wasn't
permitted. Brain activity could mean Mistress Nine was trying to regain control again. No

>one had any idea how to remove Mistress Nine from Saturn's body without some form of
magical help, and the only mage with that power lay unconscious in this room.

>
Poor Saturn... she never wanted to get involved like this... no one sane would want to

>be possessed by Mistress Nine! She's so innocent... powerful, yes, but she doesn't like to
use that power.

>
Queen Serenity walked in. "Hello, your highness," Pluto said with a nod of her head.

>
Serenity nodded slightly to her. "How are things going with them?"

>
"Saturn hasn't been allowed any brain activity. Immora is

starting to show some

>subconscious activity though."

>"Is there any way to bring her out of her coma?" Akeru asked.

>The other Senshi started waking up then, stretching and muttering in confused tones. They'd
also fallen asleep in their chairs.

>
Pluto thought hard, while Serenity summoned a doctor. The doctor came quickly and

>started checking all the machines, adjusting some knobs and making notes on a notepad.
"She might wake up sooner than we expected, perhaps only a few more months..." she told them.

>She made some marks on a form, then looked up at them. "I'd like to get her a dosage of a
particular medication that can stimulate her brain activity more and help her with this.

>She can't heal herself right now so we have to do it for her."

>"Are you sure it will really help her and not make things worse?" Akeru asked with a
concerned look.

>
The doctor adjusted the flow on the IV. "I am positive this will work. Junolistine

>is a very commonly used medication, so far it hasn't failed anyone."

>Akeru growled at her, "And how do you know it will help someone who relies _completely_
on magic?! Nothing but her own magic can heal her, and she doesn't have that option now,

>does she?!"

>The doctor cocked an eyebrow and pushed her glasses higher up on her nose. "It is
possible that this will work. Just because she--"

>
"Please don't fight about this," Queen Serenity said in a soft, serious voice. "Let

>us try this, Akeru. It might work. After all--"

>Pluto interrupted, "Akeru has a point. Immora's mental and physical stability seem to
rely on her magic, with she sorely lacks now. Modern medicine probably won't--"

>
A faint groan drew their attention to Immora's bedside. Their eyes widened as Immora

>slowly grimaced and her eyes opened partially. The doctor froze in shock. "How could _this_
happen?!" she whispered, glancing at the monitors next to Immora's bed that were reading

>normal brain activity on them. "And so suddenly!"

>Akeru wasted no time in racing to Immora's side. "Immora, are you okay?! How do you
feel?"

>
Immora blinked twice, then rolled her head in Akeru's direction. Her lips parted but

>no words came out. The doctor quickly came over and took the archmage's wrist, checking her
pulse. "Normal pulse... her breathing is okay... this is a very unusual and sudden recovery.

>I have no explanation for it."

>Immora groaned and tried to sit up but she could barely move. Serenity came over and watched
her movements. "I do believe she is unable to perform actions such as speech and movement.

>Without her magic she's completely helpless."

>The doctor started to scribble on her notepad what had occurred, when a soft purple
glow filled the room.

>
"Oh shit--" Uranus murmured.

>
Saturn was sitting up in bed, arms dangling at her sides and head tilted far back,

>with the sigil on her forehead glowing faintly. Her eyes were closed

with a strange red
glow coming from beneath her lids. Mars, the closest to her, screeched, "Someone put her
>back under again!"
>The doctor grabbed a needle and filled it with a sedative as quickly as she could
while Saturn slowly floated above the bed. Immora watched with wide eyes at what was
>happening. Saturn slowly opened her glowing red eyes, the sigil on her forehead changing
into a black star as she did so.

>
Without warning, there was a bright flash of red light and Hotaru dropped to the bed again,
>breathing hard. The sigil on her forehead returned to normal, the red in her eyes disappearing.
A black shadowed form appeared briefly around her then dissipated. She lay there, completely

>still, for several moments, before giving a small choked sob and curling into a ball.
>The Senshi present raced over from their beds to Saturn's side. Immora slowly sat
>up, her mouth moving as if silently uttering words. Queen Serenity came up and gathered
>the sobbing girl in her arms. "Shhh... it's okay... everything will be alright, Hotaru..."
>Saturn sniffled and gave a choked cry. "It was so... so terrible... she *cough* she
>controlled everything and *sob* I-I couldn't do a thing about it... and-and then suddenly
>she was gone and--" She went into a coughing fit. The doctor set the sedative down and let
>the room briefly, returning with a glass of water. Saturn drank it slowly, taking deep
>breaths to get her breathing back to normal. She wiped her eyes and drew a shuddered breath.
>"I don't know why she left so suddenly... but God I am so happy..."
>
Serenity helped Saturn shakily stand. "Pluto," she called, "please help me to our room..."
>I have some questions to ask you... about what happened."
>
>Pluto nodded and carefully led the girl out the door. The doctor cried after them, "She's in
>no condition to be leaving!!!" Her call went ignored. The doctor sighed. "Fine then... ignore
>me..."
>Akeru ahemed loudly. "I believe you have a patient right here that needs you... ?"
>She glared at the doctor hard. "NOW would be a good time to help her."
>
The doctor sighed. "Why me?"
>

>
Time: An hour later
>Place: A lake on the moon, just outside the palace grounds
>

>Uranus, Neptune, Mars, and Mercury had gone down to a lake to sit and talk.
>Several people sat along the shore opposite them and many people bathed in the waters.
>
"It's highly unusual for someone to recover so suddenly... and it's even more
>unusual that they recovered within seconds of each other," Mercury said in concerned tones.
>"I agree," Neptune said. "I mean, how could it have happened? Just moments before
>Immora was completely comatose with no brain activity whatsoever."
>
Mars opened her mouth to speak, when she heard footsteps coming

up behind them. Everyone

>turned around, and was surprised to see Saturn walking up, wearing a black dress. "Hotaru!"
Mars said in a shocked voice. "What are you--"

>
Saturn sat down on a rock, her eyes closed tight. The symbol on her forehead gleamed

>dully. "Pluto and I... had a talk. Mistress Nine has left me... but I've been having strange
premonitions ever since I woke up. I sense... oh God, I can't even speak of it!"

>
"Premonitions of what?" Mars asked. "I can't see how anything else can go wrong. I mean,

>look around us!" She swept her arm around, her gesture encompassing the Moon Kingdom and the rest
of the planets. "Look at all this wonder here! Sure, some bad things have happened lately, but

>things will always turn out for the better! Besides, if something bad was going to happen, I
would feel it too."

>
Saturn opened her eyes, the cold, sad look that marred their beauty made Mars doubt her words.

>"Pluto told me... everything. About why this universe is here. Why we are in these lives now. She
told me..." Saturn started shaking.

"Oh God! It's so horrible! I can't--" Saturn leapt from the

>rock and bolted, taking off flying into the sky.

>"Oh great," Mercury groaned. "None of us has great experience with flying--

>"--I'll get her," Uranus said as she took off after Saturn.

>Saturn was quick as she darted through the air. Uranus had a hard time keeping up. What
terrible things had Pluto told her?

>
Saturn suddenly stopped. Uranus barely managed to stop before hitting her. "Hotaru, you

>have to tell us what she said! Please!"

>Saturn whirled around. "No." Her lips compressed in a thin line. "I cannot... I cannot say
what she has told me. No one would understand... no one could ever..." Her body racked with sobs.

>"It's just so terrible! Everything was so wonderful in the old world-- and-and then Mistress Nine
came... and... oh God, I destroyed it all! I destroyed everything!"

>
Uranus was stunned into silence. She felt an odd sensation go through her, as if a memory

>was trying to surface. She shuddered and slowly landed on the ground, followed shortly by
Saturn.

>
"Saturn, I had no idea--"

>
Saturn just whirled to face her and bitterly rasped, "Well, it happened! And you know what

>else happened, I--"

>"ENOUGH!!!!" A voice shouted.

>The two women turned to see Pluto standing several yards from them, her Time Key in hand,
wearing her Senshi fuku. Her face was drawn in a dark scowl. "You'd said enough, Saturn. You've >told her enough."

>Saturn started shaking, then cried out, "Why did you hide this from us?! We have a right
to know!!!"

>
Pluto flinched slightly. "You... have... no idea... what pain I've had to live with... all

>these eons. How could I hope for any of you to understand?!"

>There was a flash of light, and all the other Senshi appeared around

them. They seemed
terribly stunned; Pluto had pulled them from wherever they were and brought them here.

>
"What's going on here?!" Jupiter demanded.

>
Pluto bit her lip and bowed her head. "It's time that you knew... what happened... to the

>old Silver Millennium... and the life that followed... and why you are here now."

>Her forehead sigla flared with light as images formed in their minds to accompany the events
she started to describe to them. They saw the old Silver Millennium, then the new Earth that >followed, their old lives, and finally, the destruction of their world and the rebirth of the
galaxy. The memories weren't complete, they were from Pluto's point of view, but they were

>enough for now.

>None of them could tell exactly how long it all took. But when they opened their eyes, they
felt an immense sense of powerlessness come over them. "I can't believe it," Princess Serenity >whispered. "You've had to live with this knowledge all this time... you and Usagi..."

>Pluto nodded sadly.

>"It's all so hard to accept," Mars whispered. "All of this coming to us at once... you mean,
this place... the lives we live now... were never supposed to be?"

>
Pluto nodded again.

>
The Senshi all stood there, trying to accept what had just been revealed to them, wondering

>if they ever would be able to.

>

>Time: A few hours lately; roughly dinnertime
Place: A meeting room inside the palace

>

>
Queen Serenity sat silently listening as her advisors, Luna and Artemis, argued over whether

>or not their message was the most important to deliver first. Luna seemed about to win the debate,
when Princess Serenity burst into the meeting room in tears. Luna and Artemis fell off the marble

>table they'd been sitting on, while the queen rushed over to see what was wrong with her daughter.
Luna and Artemis quickly raced from the room as the princess fell into her mother's arms, sobbing

>loudly.

>"Oh mother, Pluto showed us w-what happened in the Or-Original Time... o-our old lives... how
it all ended..." Princess Serenity drew a shuddered breath as her mother stroked her long, silvery

>white hair.

>"A terrible burden for someone so young," the queen murmured.

>"I saw this time-- or rather, the first Silver Millennium-- end. It was horrible! So many died,
so many--" the princess broke off as she coughed hard.

>
The queen saw a man hovering near the door... it was Endymion.

"Go get a glass of water for the

>her," she told her son-in-law.

>Endymion nodded and obediently left the room.

>The queen listened to her daughter for a long time, wondering, "What did she see? What went
wrong?"

>

>
Time: Roughly the same
>Place: A dining hall

>

>Mars, Venus, and Mercury sat in stunned silence, not even noticing when their lovers arrived.
Jadeite took his seat by Mars, not taking much notice of her trance-like state. After all, she was probably just having a premonition, right? Kunzite and Zoisite showed more concern, but didn't try
to prod the two princesses out of their state.
>
Jadeite reached over and clasped Mars's hand, and was surprised when she flinched and jerked her hand back.

>Will that time ever come to pass? she wondered. In that time, Jadeite tried to kill me. He
was evil. Did it really happen, or was Pluto making up images? Mars almost cried from the frustration she felt. She looked up and saw Jadeite there, and gave a weak smile before retreating
into her dreary thoughts again.
>
Zoisite and Kunzite waiting in patient silence. Slowly, Venus and Mercury's eyes came back into focus. They seemed surprised to see the two men there, almost scared. Kunzite looked over at Zoisite
as if to say, "What the heck is wrong with them?"
>
Jupiter soon entered the room, followed by Nephrite. She seemed a bit less cheerful than usual, but tried not to show it. I wonder what he was like in the Original Time, she wondered. As far as those
memories show, he died before I became a senshi.
>
Usagi walked in, with her hair braided and a pink robe on. Luna-P trailed behind her at a short distance. Usagi seemed no less different from usual, but as her red eyes darted nervously to each
Senshi in the room, they could tell she was upset that they'd been told about the Original Time.
>
After everyone had sat down, Saturn trailed in. She seemed almost trancelike, walking lightly as if she would take to the sky any moment now. Her face quivered slightly with tension as her mind
kept repeating the image of her using her Death Reborn Revolution. She almost missed the chair when she sat down, and never looked at her plate as she ate.

>Neptune and Uranus came in separately for once. Neptune didn't seem at all phased by the memories
they'd received earlier. She immediately started eating and struck up a conversation with Kunzite.
>Uranus appeared deeply disturbed as she sat down. She barely ate and her eyes remained focused on her
hands during the whole meal.
>
It wasn't until after everyone had eaten and regained their senses that Pluto walked in. The four Generals were surprised to see the faces of all but Usagi harden at the arrival of the mysterious
woman. "Leave us," Pluto said softly to them.
>
The Generals looked at her quizzically, before they rose and left. Pluto pulled up a chair at the head of the table, then waited for someone to acknowledge her. Uranus looked up at her and
sneered, "Do you expect thanks for

what you did? Do you think we enjoyed that?"

>
Pluto's eyes narrowed. "I did it because you deserve to know what happened. I did not do it
>out of meanness or cruelty." She slammed her fist hard on the marble table. "I gave you all what
you wanted and now you shun me for it?!?" She sat with her shoulders shaking as the other Senshi

>watched her with narrowed eyes.

>"She's... right... you know..." a low, forced whisper said, coming from the doors to the room.

>The Senshi looked to see Immora, leaning heavily against the door frame with a thin sky blue
dress clinging to her thin frame.
"You... should thank... her... not... hate her..." She closed her

>eyes as if tired and slumped slightly. Akeru came up behind her and helped her into a chair. Immora
soon slumped down over the table in exhaustion.

>
Jupiter clenched her fist tightly. "I think the real problem is that you should have told us

>sooner. By holding out on us, you made it worse."

>Pluto gritted her teeth. "I did what was right."

>Mars stood up quickly, her chair falling back behind her as she shouted, "Maybe you thought
it was right, but to us it was cruel and... and terrible!"

>
Venus grabbed Mars's arm and pulled her back into her seat as Pluto stood up. "I don't have to

>sit her and listen to this! I came to explain why I did what I did, and now you all leap down my
throat!" She held up her Time Staff and said, "Dark Dome-- Open!"

>
A shimmering purple light formed, then the doors to the Time Gate opened behind her. Pluto started

>to step through when Immora's voice warned her, "If you leave... now... you'll do even more... harm."

>Pluto turned, her red eyes glaring hard at the archmage. "You woke up only today. You already start to
judge me. I thought you to be a friend. I see I was wrong. You are weak, pathetic, and evil. I should

>be ashamed I ever thought of you as a good person."

>Immora's blue eyes widened slightly in shock, while Akeru leapt from her seat, attempting to attack
Pluto. Pluto's staff blocked her path. "Just leave me alone," Pluto muttered as she stepped through

>the doors. They started to shut behind her as Immora stood up. She held out her hand, and there was a
bright glow. The doors ceased their closing motion. "What are you trying to do now?" Pluto murmured.

>
Immora narrowed her eyes slightly in consideration, then shrugged. The doors closed tight, then

>shimmered away again.

>"Good riddance," Mars whispered halfheartedly.

>

>Time: An hour later
Place: The Gate of Time

>

>
Pluto stood staring into a tall mirror. Images danced across its surface. She watched things happen.

>She had no effect on them. She couldn't do anything. Pluto narrowed her eyes in frustration, then balled
her fist and punched the mirror. Shards of glass flew from it, stinging her skin. Pluto whirled around

>angrily and smashed another mirror. "Why can't I do anything

right?!?!" she cried. "Ever since this time
started, it's been one failure after another!" Pluto slumped to her knees, then shouted to the sky, "Why

>can't I do my job right?! Why can't everything just go back to the way it was before Saturn destroyed
everything?!"

>
With a sob, Pluto curled into a ball and cried.

>

>

>

> TEN

> _____

>

>Setsuna Meiou had always been a quiet, thoughtful, and reserved person.
She had few friends by choice, made excellent grades in school, and was

>far more intelligent than any other person her age. She was the princess
of a freezing cold planet populated by warm hearted people. She was

>well-known, admired, and respected. And then it all changed.

>She was about twenty-three at the time, when the mark of Pluto suddenly
flared into life on her forehead, and she knew that she would become

>Sailor Pluto. Her parents thought it was wonderful. Her siblings thought
she was amazing. The people loved her even more, for now she was their

>protector as well as their future ruler. She hated it. She hated knowing
that one day she'd be responsible for the safety of all these people.

>She hated being given powers she couldn't understand. She hated the men
and women that had selected her for this job.

>
She went to the Moon Kingdom, as she'd been ordered. She met the other

>First Senshi there. They were given a mission-- to go to Jupiter and
prevent an attack on the capital. And so they all went.

>
The Dark Kingdom had sent three dozen soldiers to kill the king and queen.

>The Senshi arrived in time to stop the murder of the king, but the queen
was killed. The soldiers turned and opened fire on the Senshi. Pluto

>suddenly screamed a phrase that would later become one of the things her
duties prevented her from doing.

>
She stopped time.

>
The bullets of energy froze.

>
Her companions all turned and looked at her in shock and horror.

>
Pluto dropped to her knees in shock.

>
And then a man suddenly appeared, holding a staff formed to look like a

>key in his hands. He told her about the Gate of Time, and how she'd now
be responsible for _that_ too.

>
Time started again. The Senshi were able to avoid the physical blows, but

>when the man returned for Pluto, the anguish was overwhelming.

Sailor
Pluto was now spending her time watching over the Gate of Time, only

>emerging to help the Senshi in battle. The first twenty years weren't
so bad though. There wasn't much to watch over.

>
But then another, larger battle came. The Senshi were pushed to the limit, trying as hard as they could to battle the hundreds of Dark Kingdom forces. It was a long, excruciating fight, but eventually, the Senshi won. The Senshi went back to normal lives while Pluto returned
to her Gate. That's when things started to get taxing.

>
Those First Senshi died off, except for Pluto. As she watched them slowly age and die, she remained youthful, stronger than ever. It appalled her and terrified her, having to lose her friends while she stayed the same. For a long, long stretch of years, no more Senshi arrived. But then new Senshi appeared, but no Pluto was among these.

>Setsuna would always be the only one. The Senshi fought a long hard battle, barely winning, but they managed to push back the Dark Kingdom again. And again, she watched as her friends' lives ended.

>For centuries, Senshi came and went. Time flowed while Pluto nonchalantly watched. Time didn't pass like it did for other people.

>Most people spent their lives fighting against time, trying to cheat death. Pluto didn't have to. Her power was time, and she wouldn't die as long as time was around.

>Then came the final Senshi. Ami, Minako, Rei, and Makoto were brought to
protect Princess Serenity from the Dark Kingdom. Haruka and Michiru would protect the Silver Millennium, with Setsuna's assistance. Hotaru
was held in reserve for her enormous power was unchecked. They fought many battles, and won most of them. Setsuna was confident in them. But
time decided to play games. She couldn't see into the possibilities

>in time. When she finally saw what would happen, there was nothing she
could do. The Dark Kingdom attacked. Countless people were killed. Ami and Rei were the first of the Senshi to be killed in the onslaught. Minako
died fending off an attack on Serenity. Makoto was largely outnumbered.

>Michiru and Haruka died in each other's arms. Then the dear Princess Serenity died.

>
She stood watching their deaths, unable to take part in the battle. The Silver Millennium was over. She watched the Queen use her last strength
to send the Senshi into the future. Hotaru and Setsuna were left behind.

>Setsuna gave her a last order, then returned to the Gate of Time. Hotaru
used her power to destroy the palace and life on the other planets. Only Earth was habitable now. Once prosperous planets became wastelands that
no one could survive on. A few of them even turned into gas planets from the might of her attack. Then Hotaru died, and was gone for many millennia,
just like the others.

>
Setsuna was overjoyed when finally they were reborn. Slowly, she became

>a part of their lives again. Her friends were back. They faced many foes,
and for the first time, Setsuna faced death when she died in the battle

>against Galaxia. But she returned to life. They all returned.

>Their lives were peaceful for several years. Chibi-Usa was no longer a
little girl. Hotaru had returned to her original state. Mamoru and Usagi

>were engaged to be married. Then things went very wrong again. Again,
Pluto couldn't see the possibilities. The consequences were dire. Mistress

>Nine attacked unexpectedly. They were all returning from a concert. There
was barely enough time to henshin before Saturn was knocked unconscious.

>The battle dragged on for a long time, then finally, they were defeated.
All but Pluto, Saturn, and Chibi-Moon were killed. Pluto was terrified.

>It was too late. After a short battle with Mistress Nine, Saturn woke up.
At glaive point, Pluto was forced to hide herself and Chibi-Moon from her

>eyes. Saturn ended the galaxy. Pluto watched with Chibi-Moon, went to
Crystal Tokyo briefly, watched it all end, and waited with her for many

>millennia as the galaxy slowly reformed. Time was starting to get to her.
Pluto became emotional, tired, and irritable. She was tired of the endless

>duty. Chibi-Usa took on her mother's name. Finally, the Silver Millennium
arrived. No Pluto was born-- again, she was the only one. After so many

>years, her friends were reborn. But she had lost touch with time. She
couldn't understand it anymore. She could sense it, and affect it to some

>extent, control it and stop it, but her precognitive abilities were awry.
Her knowledge was disrupted. She knew fear. She hid all knowledge of the

>Original Time from her friends.

>When was it that Immora had come to her, offering to take the duties
from her? Immora was prepared for the burden. She was already immortal,

>and was willing to take the task. She had nothing to live for, after all,
why not have some purpose in her life? Why had Setsuna refused?

>
Fear. Fear that time wouldn't go on without her. She had become too

>wrapped up in her duties. She had shouted at Immora, appalled at her for
suggesting such a thing. Immora sadly shrugged and left.

>
Was that where their friendship had fallen apart? After all, they didn't

>get along anymore. She really didn't know Immora that well. Her past was
hidden from time. Her memories were shot. She couldn't remember her name,

>or certain people in her life anymore. She seemed to have lived enough to
make up for the loss. But Pluto couldn't leave the duty. After countless

>years, it had become a part of her. She wanted to cast them aside, give
them up, but time wouldn't let her. So she didn't.

>
When did Immora change for the worse? Pluto didn't know. Immora had been

>through a lot, and the change was so gradual that Pluto didn't notice at
first. The carefree, kind archmage had slowly become bitter, resentful,
>and obsessed with power. She'd forgotten about friends and become wrapped
up in her magic. No wonder Necros's memory-wipe spell had worked so well.

>She couldn't remember her friends, her enemies, or her lover. She couldn't
remember Pluto. So Pluto forgot about her. She didn't want a friend who had
>turned to evil.
>Her friends, the Senshi, went about their lives. Pluto spent less and
less time at the Gate of Time. Things were going wonderful. There was
>only an occasional battle, and they had defeated Queen Beryl and
>Mistress Nine. Life looked good now. Then Immora appeared again. Things
>started going terribly wrong. Immora tried to destroy the Moon Kingdom.
Uranus's mother died, leaving her without any family. Mistress Nine
>returned and finally took possession of Hotaru again. Hotaru and Immora
were caught in a brief, terrible battle, that ended in an eight month
>coma for both. When they awakened, Pluto was ready to finally return the
knowledge of the Original Millennium to her friends. So she did. But for
>some reason, they didn't seem to want it. They hated her now. They yelled at her. Stunned and appalled, Pluto fled to her Gate again.
>
Which is where she is now.
>

>
Time: Several hours after the end of the last chapter
>Place: The Gate of Time
>

>Pluto groggily woke up from a fitful sleep full of confusing dreams.

In them, she'd relived most of her life up to this point. It was a
>startling thing for her, and she had not enjoyed the experience. Why

had_ she relived them? She looked around her, and thought she noticed
>a silhouette dart into the shadows. She sensed a power... was it magic?

No... she thought about it harder... it was sorcery. She could at least
>rule out Immora as the one who'd done it, but who would come here and

place a spell like that on her?
>
She grabbed her staff as she stood up and looked around her. Everything
>else was normal, it seemed. The tall mirrors still hung in the empty void. The Gate still loomed before her as always. Nothing had changed,
>and probably nothing ever would.
>She stretched and walked over to a mirror, pressing her hand to it. An

image flickered across the surface. Saturn. She was sitting at a large
>dining table. Pluto narrowed her eyes slightly. The image spread to reveal the other Senshi sitting with her too. Pluto could hear their words faintly and her lips tightened. She walked away from the mirror.

She didn't feel like ever returning. Maybe she wouldn't.
>
Hmmm... she always loved Shakespeare's writings... why not

reread them all?

>Pluto sat down in a chair, picked up a book, and began to read.

>

>Time: About the same
Place: A dining hall, the Palace

>

>
"Pluto has been gone for several hours now," Saturn said bitterly. "It

>doesn't look like she's coming back anytime soon."

>"Maybe we should look at this differently," Serenity said. "Instead of
thinking of how 'terrible' things are, we need to realize that Pluto

>gave us these memories to help us. We need to know about the Original
Time and what went wrong in the Silver Millennium so we can avoid the

>mistakes."

>"How will we ever determine the mistakes though? We could barely remember
them in the Original Time, so how will we now?"

>

>"I don't know," Serenity moaned in miserable tones. "We need _someone_
here who remembers it, other than Pluto! But who does?!"

>
"_I_ can remember it. I could help you remember it..." a voice said.

>
"Oh no," Mars groaned.

>
They turned to see Immora standing there. "I can remember parts of it.

>In fact, I could go there. Or I could place a spell on you that would
cause your memories to surface. That is, if you want my help."

>
"Why would we want _your_ help?" Jupiter spat bitterly. "After all the

>pain you've caused us?"

>"I also saved your lives, and that of this galaxy," Immora cried out.
"And I paid for it! For eight months, I did! What kind of thanks is this?!"

>
"Thanks?!" Mars shrieked. "You think we should _thank_ you?!"

>
"After all I've done--"

>
"After all you've done wrong?! Ha!"

>
"What the hell do you mean?!"

>
"You've done so many terrible things! I feel sorry for anyone that has

>to be near you anytime. Too bad people can't pick who they love,
because Akeru sure wouldn't pick you if she had a choice in the matter,

>would she?!"

>"ENOUGH!!!!" A voice shouted.

>The senshi and Immora all turned to see Queen Serenity standing in the
doorway, an angry, disappointed look on her face. "Q-Queen Serenity!"

>Mars stuttered.

>"I could hear you shouting all the way down the hall. I will not
tolerate this kind of behavior. Tell me what's going on, NOW."

>
"What's to say," Neptune said, "other than that Immora offered to help

>us understand our memories and now they're getting mad at her."

>"Why is that? Mars? I heard you yelling loudest, tell me why."

>Mars gritted her teeth. "She thinks we owe her thanks for what she's

done. Why should we thank her?"
>
Immora coldly snapped, "You wouldn't even be alive if it wasn't
for me!
>No one in this galaxy would be!"

>Queen Serenity sighed. "Immora, you can't expect thanks for your
help.
The negative things you've done outweigh the positive by
far."
>
"How can you say that?!" Immora cried out. "You don't know what
all I've
>lived through! For many centuries, I've tried to do what I can to
help.
I teach others how to use their magic, I've saved many
planets and
>galaxies from destruction, I've helped the needy, I've done so many

things! I've made so many sacrifices trying to do what I can to
help!
>I've lost so much and barely gotten a word of thanks. I think I
deserve
that much!"
>
Queen Serenity took a seat and gestured for Immora to do so, but
Immora
>remained standing. "Look, everyone, I don't know who all was
involved in
this argument, but we need to look past the
differences. If someone
>offers to help you, you should accept."

>"She probably can offer a lot of help," Neptune commented. "If she's

been to that time, as she claims, she could help us understand it
>better."

>"Help twist our views to match hers_!" Mars argued.

>Immora narrowed her eyes. "Why do you hold such a strong grudge
against
me?"
>
"You want to know why?! Fine. I'll tell you why. Several months
ago, you
>just suddenly popped up, didn't even explain who you were, and tried
to
destroy this place. Saturn barely managed to stop you. You
never even
>apologized to us! You go around acting so haughty and superior to
us.
You act like having power gives you the right to do what you
want. You
>only help when it benefits you_." Mars sat back in her chair
angrily.
"That's_ why."
>
Queen Serenity looked to Immora. "What do you have to say about
that?"
>
Immora was staring at Mars with wavering eyes, her hands shaking

>slightly. "You want an apology? Fine. Fine. I'll give you one. I'm
sorry
that my former teacher put those spells on me that made me
lose most of
>my memories. I'm sorry his spells made me immortal. I'm sorry his
spells
caused me to lose control over my actions. I'm sorry that
I have seen so
>much more than you and know so much more. I'm sorry that I couldn't

control my own actions when 'I' attacked Saturn. I'm sorry for
saving
>this damn galaxy when no one but Akeru cares that I was comatose for

eight months and that I had a very large chance of never waking
up
>because I used so much magic to save everyone. Are you happy_ Mars?

Are you happy that I've so little control over my life because of

Necros?

>Are you happy that I can't even remember my own family?! Are you happy

that I had to lose Akeru for so many centuries because I was manipulated

>by my own best friend who I _thought_ I could trust?! ARE YOU?!"
Immora
fled the room, the sounds of her sobbing echoing down the halls as she ran.

>
Everyone sat in stunned silence as they waited for the shock to pass. "I

>had no idea..." Princess Serenity murmured. "I had no idea she felt that
way."

>
"I never cared," Mars grumbled. "Who can honestly say they do?"

>

>
Time: several minutes later

>Place: Immora's guest quarters, the Palace

>

>"None of them understand! They just criticize me and hate me and--"

Immora started coughing in between sobs. "They won't listen to me.

>They don't care that I risked so much to save this place and--" she
broke into a fit of coughs and stopped talking. Akeru held her tightly

>in her arms, trying to calm her down.

>"You can't expect them to understand," she said quietly. "They're so
young. They have a lot to learn."

>
"Why won't they at least try?" Immora whispered hoarsely.

>
"Maybe they don't want to try. They're stubborn. They don't know the

>real you."

>Immora took in deep breaths and wiped her cheeks off. "I just wish that
I didn't have to deal with this stuff. It's not fair! I never wanted to

>be immortal. I never wanted to live this long. If it weren't for you,
I'd probably do everything I could to remove the spell.

You're all I

>have... but I love you so much... I keep on living so that I can be with
you... you're the only reason I keep going on...."

>
Akeru was silent for a moment. "Do you really mean that?" she asked as

>gently as she could. "You have a lot of things. You have students who need
you. You have gained so much knowledge. You have friends."

>
"They're not important! None of that's important!" Immora cried. "I'd give

>it all up in a heart beat if it meant being with you forever. If something
ever happened... if you died... I'd go back to Quenhol. I'd have the

>sorceresses there do everything in their power to remove the spell and let
me die."

>
Akeru cupped Immora's in her hands and quietly asked, "Do I really mean

>that much to you? Am I really the only person that you really need?"

>"Yes," Immora whispered, wiping another tear away from her cheek.

"Yes,
you are."

>
She closed her eyes as her lips brushed against Akeru's, before they

>pressed together in a long, soft kiss. They hesitated before pulling

away from each other's touch. "I love you, Immora," Akeru
breathed. "I
>will love you forever. I would do anything for you."

>Immora relaxed against her and sighed softly. "I love you too...

always... thank you..." Her breathing slowed and she drew in
slow,
>shuddered breaths, trying to ease her frayed nerves. Akeru's fingers

gently stroked her hair, soothing her until Immora was calm.

>
Both were surprised when someone started knocking on the door.
Immora

>paused, then called, "Who is it?"

>"Princess Venus."

>Immora's eyes widened in surprise, but she allowed Venus to open the

door. The princess slowly walked in, her eyes on the floor.

"Immora,

>we all had a talk after you left. Um, Mars said she's sorry for
yelling
at you."

>
"Does she really mean that or is she just trying to keep the
queen from

>getting mad at her again?"

>Venus's head snapped up. "What??? Mars means it, really she does.
She
just... well, uh, she doesn't understand why you've done the
things

>you've done. She would apologize in person, but... um, she thinks
you
would try to attack her or something..."

>
"There's good enough reason for me to... but no, I wouldn't."
Immora

>pulled away from Akeru and stood up. "Are the senshi willing to
accept
my help or not?"

>
Venus sighed. "Yes. We agreed that we need your help with this."

>
"Very well." She grabbed her cloak, which she'd thrown onto a
chair,

>and fastened it around her shoulders loosely. "Do you want to come,

Akeru?"

>
Akeru shook her head slightly. "No, I think they wouldn't
appreciate

>that. I'll wait here."

>Immora nodded and smiled slightly. "I'll be back a bit later." She

shut the door behind her and followed Venus down the hall. "Where
are

>we going, anyways?" she asked as they started walking.

>"There's a large room for mages on the other side of the palace. The

mages here like using it to perform spells, so we thought maybe
you

>would too."

>Immora looked around the hallway and commented, "You do realize my

magic is still very weak? I might not be able to make the
memories

>surface yet since my powers are so low now."

>Venus stopped short and turned around to look at her. "Immora, it
was
hard enough to convince everyone to agree to this... if it
doesn't

>work..."

>Immora sighed and looked down at the floor. "Look, I can't expect
them
to understand... they don't know what it's like to have this
type of

>power. I may need to call a friend for help though."

>"Who?"

>"A student of mine named Sharra... you remember her, right? Elf, long
purple hair... besides, it would be good for her to meet the queen.

>Sharra is the queen of a world called Quenhol, which lies beyond Pluto.
Maybe this could be a good opportunity to open up negotiations between

>the Moon Kingdom and Quenhol."

>"I remember Sharra vaguely... another world, huh? I heard some babble
about another planet being out there, but I never really believed it..."

>Venus started walking down the hall again.

>"Quenhol is real, you know. I lived there for a very long time, and my
all students live there. It's very beautiful. You'd probably like it,

>Venus."

>"Really? Maybe I'll have to-- oh, here it is."

>Venus led Immora into the room and shut the door behind them. Immora
looked around the room, shocked at the similarities between it and the

>rooms in the building where she taught her students. The circular room
was very large, with marble floors and a high domed ceiling, also made

>of marble. The walls were made of polished wood, with a couple dozen
candle holders set in them. The candles in them were lit and shone bright,

>their light reflecting off several communications crystals resting in
special holders and a large mirror standing against the wall. Magical

>symbols were etched into the walls and on some of the marble pieces. A
model of the solar system was suspended in the air under the domed

>ceiling, complete with each of the planets that were in the Moon
Kingdom, their moons, and light shining from the model sun. The senshi,

>minus Pluto and Usagi, were standing in the center of the room, where
dozens of cushions were scattered. Immora very slowly approached them,

>still gazing around the room.

>"Are you ready, Immora?" Saturn asked. "We are."

>Immora looked over to her. "I am... but I don't know if I have enough
magic in me right now... may I call a friend here?"

>
The purple haired woman nodded after exchanging glances with the other

>senshi. "Please make it quick. We'd like to get this over with as soon
as possible."

>
Immora walked over to the communications crystal and pressed her slender

>hand against it. A woman appeared on the screen. "I'm sorry, but if you
are trying to make a connection from this room, you need permission

>from one of the mages--"

>"I don't need permission," Immora said coolly. "I am an archmage."

>The woman seemed to be unimpressed. "Unless you have proof of that--"

>"I am Immora," the archmage hissed. "Doesn't that mean a thing to

you?"
>The woman sighed. "Ma'am, I don't care who you are, I'm required to
check with someone before I can allow anyone to make a connection."

>
"Whose idea was it to give crystal transmitters operators?" Immora grumbled. "Fine, but hurry up!"
>The screen went black for a few minutes. While she waited, Immora turned to the senshi. "Sorry about that," Princess Serenity said. "We didn't know that they would have someone on the other end to monitor
calls."

>
"I can't believe she didn't recognize my name..." Immora grumbled. "If she's around mages alot, she should know it well..."
>The woman appeared on the screen again. "You have permission to make a
call. Please limit it to five minutes. Your words will be monitored."

>
Immora finally was able to contact Sharra. "Immora, good to see you," what do you want?" Sharra asked.
>"I have a favor to ask. The senshi wish to have some memories restored,
but I don't have the energy to do it yet. Could you cast the spell for me?"
>"Yes, but why not one of the mages there?"
>Immora laughed. "I don't know them! I trust you though. You are going
to have to link with my mind to do it right though, since the time we're focusing on for them hasn't been visited by you. Come here now, they're
limiting this call and monitoring it."

>
"Very well, let me assign someone to assume my duties. I will be there shortly."
>Immora nodded. The screen went dark again. "Sharra is on her way and will
be here soon," she told the senshi.

>
"Where is she, anyways?" Mercury asked.

>
>"Quenhol. It is just past Pluto. For some reason, the people here
haven't discovered it yet."

>
Mercury frowned. "It will take a long time to get here... we don't want to wait that many hours."
>"Hours? No, no, Sharra is using magic--or sorcery! She'll be here--"
Immora looked over her shoulder at the mirror. "Ah, here she comes now."

>
A spiraling blue light shone on the surface of the mirror, and Sharra stepped through it. The light disappeared once she was through. The senshi looked on with mild shock at her unusual appearance and attire.

>Her eyes were slanted and ice blue, their gaze sharp and unrevealing.
Her eyebrows were slanted diagonally. Her smooth brown skin complemented them well. Her ears went out to the sides and came to points. Her neck
was unusually long and slender. Her hair was rich purple in color and fell to her waist. She was very tall and slender. She was clothed in
typical Quenholtian fashion. Her faded fuschia dress bared her arms

>completely and reached past her knees, but the skirt was slit to bare
the sides of her legs. A thin line of gold circled under the bottom of
>each breast. Her skirt was trimmed in gold, as was the armholes and the tall collar of her dress and the small slit in the fabric that went down
>the length of her neck. The faded fuschia gloves reached to her elbows
were also trimmed in gold, and the matching boots that came to her knees
>also. An oval shaped white crystal was affixed to the center of her forehead, and a string of tiny pearls kept it in place, the piece of jewelry being a simple of royalty. Her full, pouty lips were painted dark purple.
>
Princess Serenity was the first to speak, "Hello, welcome to the moon.
>I'm Princess Serenity."

>Sharra smiled slightly. "Queen Clorianostriana, of Quenhol."

>Princess Serenity was surprised by her thick accent and name. "Nice to
meet you, Cl-Clor-- uh..."
>
"Just call me Sharra."
>
"Right, Sharra, these are my friends..." she introduced the present
>senshi one by one.

>"Tell me, why do you need this spell cast? Immora didn't exactly
explain it to me..."
>
"Um... I'll explain later... it's a long story."
>
"Very well. I'd like to here it later. Are you all ready?"

>
The senshi nodded their agreement.
>
Sharra went over to where Immora was. "I'm ready," she said.
Immora
>nodded to her as the queen placed her gloved fingers against Immora's
temples. Her lips moved slightly as she whispered the words of a spell.
>As soon as she finished, she turned to the senshi. "Sit down," she said.
"You too, Immora. This spell will fill the room, and I can't prevent it
>from revealing all the memories of not only the senshi but us as well.
You will all see the Silver Millennium as it was in the Original Time,
>but the spell will also cause your mind to relive any other memories that
you cannot recall." As Immora and the senshi sat down, Sharra whispered
>the last few words. The candles in the room dimmed slightly. The symbols
on the foreheads of the senshi began to glow, as well as Immora and
>Sharra's eyes. Slowly, they began to remember. It took nearly an hour for
the spell to complete.
>
Their childhoods flashed before them, then their training as senshi,
>their lovers, their enemies, good and bad times, then the attack on the
moon, their lives in Japan, then Mistress Nine's attack...

>
"NO!!!" Serenity cried. "No!"
>
The senshi broke free of the memories, sitting and gasping. Sharra opened
>her ice blue eyes. "Did you see all that you needed to see?"

>"Oh God," Serenity whispered, shaking hard. The other senshi had similar reactions. "I saw... Beryl... the moon... death... oh god... oh god how

>did it happen? And then Mistress Nine... she killed us too..." Tears streamed down her cheeks. The senshi came over to her, all forming a

>tight group hug, each wiping away tears as they whispered to one another, trying to shake away the awful images they had seen mixed in with the good.

>
As they talked, Sharra looked over to Immora, and was about to ask her

>what happened when her eyes widened in shock. "Senshi!" she cried.

>They broke away and looked at Immora as Sharra ran over to her and started shaking her by the shoulders. Immora's eyes were closed, her

>face pale. She didn't respond at all. "Damn!" Sharra swore. "I should have
known-- the spell that is already on her-- someone get Akeru, now! Immora

>isn't coming out of it!"

>Uranus came over and also started shaking her. "Damnit, Immora, wake up!"
She slapped Immora's cheek, trying to get her to react, but the archmage

>didn't even flinch. "What the hell's happening, Sharra?!"

>"The spell I spoke... it isn't reacting well with that memory wipe
spell on her. My spell is trying to break through that spell and make

>those memories surface again... I should have been more careful! There's
nothing I can do to stop it without causing damage to her mind! I'm not

>skilled enough yet!"

>Jupiter came running back into the room with Akeru. Akeru immediately
came over to where Sharra was. "What's happening?! Why won't she wake up?!"

>Sharra explained to her what happened. Akeru's lips compressed into a
thin line. "Sharra, you've done a very dangerous thing. Who knows if

>she'll ever come out of this..." Akeru held her head in her hands.

>"All we can do is wait now," Sharra said. "Until the spell breaks
through, she won't wake up."

>
"I'll wait with her," Akeru said.

>
"I will too. It's my fault," Sharra said. "I should have waited to cast

>the spell... damn!" She hit her fist against the floor. "Immora taught
me to know better! I should have remembered what she said..."

>
"Maybe it's for the best," Mars whispered.

>
"What did you say?" Sharra said, looking up at her.

>
Mars looked down at the floor and said softly, "Immora... she seemed to

>be so upset today... about how she couldn't remember so many things...
maybe now she will... that's what she wants, right?"

>
"You might be right," Akeru said in awe. "Mars... yes, you are right..."

>Immora always told me she hated not remembering... if this spell _does_
work..."

>
"Maybe we should go--" Mercury started.
>
"No," Venus said. "We insisted that she help us, so we should stay and
make sure she is alright."

>And so they waited.

>And waited.

>And waited.

>

>Time: unknown
Place: in a memory
>

>
As she talked with her friends in the hallway at school, she couldn't
help but feel a strange chill run down her spine. She had a bad
feeling about today, and she wasn't sure why. It was almost time
for homeroom to
begin, and she was sure they'd be late if they continued talking.
"C'mon,
let's get going, I don't want to be counted tardy!" she
told them.
>
They shrugged. "Alright, let's get going."
>
"I think you just want to go to class today," one of her other
friends
>said.

>She shrugged back. "I never do, I just don't want to be late! I hope

that teachers' meeting is over so we don't have to stand around
waiting."
>
They walked to the door and were surprised to see how dark the
room was.
>None of the other kids appeared to be there yet. "That's odd..." she

commented as she opened the door and stepped in.
>
She stepped back in shock as a man suddenly walked up to her.
"Who're
>you?!" she gasped.

>"Necros. Come with me." He reached his hand toward her and she
shrieked
and threw her textbook at him.
>
"Get away from me!" she cried as she turned to run. Her friends
started
shouting for help as the man came forward.

>She gasped in shock as a piercing sound entered her mind. She
dropped to
her knees, clutching her head as she tried to block
out the sound. She
couldn't hear anything but that sound. The man grabbed her wrists
and she
was aware of a bright light filling her vision, then
suddenly, it went
>black.

>She shuddered and opened her eyes. Looking around, she was terrified
to
see that she wasn't even in her school anymore. The walls,
ceiling, and
>floor around her were made of cold stone. Some furniture was strewn
around,
but it was otherwise barren. The man stood there, smirking
at her. "It
took awhile to finally locate you, but once we did, we knew it would
be
easy to bring you here."
>
"Where am I?! How did I get here?!"
>
"I teleported you with my magic. It's quite simple actually, as
you
will learn."

>"What do you mean, I'll learn?!"

>He grabbed a bottle of wine and poured himself a glass. After
sipping
it, he responded. "I've brought you here to teach you to
hone your

>magical abilities."
>"Magic?"
>"Yes, we-- that is, my wife and I-- have determined that you have quite
a potential as a mage. It would be dangerous to let you run loose with
>these unchecked abilities."
>She stood up and started backing away. "Leave me alone!" she whispered
fiercely. "Let me go home!" She forced herself not to cry as he walked
>towards her.
>"That would be foolish. Come with me. Nagera will give you a robe to
wear and you'll start your studies."
>
"I don't want to! I want to go HOME!!! LET ME GO!!!"
>
He narrowed his eyes and suddenly she was thrown to the ground.
"I
>don't care what you want!" he snapped. "You won't get it! You'll listen
to me, and Nagera too, from now on, you understand that?!"
>
"I will NOT--"
>
She was cut off when he slapped her hard. A tear slid down her cheek as
>she curled herself into a ball.
>"This way," he said coldly as he grabbed her arm and made her stand up,
leading the way down the hall. "You better learn not to talk back, or
>your next punishment will be far worse than just a slap."

>
>"Shut up!" Necros snapped at the defiant young Earth-born girl. His
firm hand connected with her cheek as he slapped her. "I won't have you
>telling me that this spell goes against your beliefs! I decide what
you believe in!"
>
The young woman hung her head, shielding her face with her hair. The
>other students, clad in the black robes that everyone had to wear,
looked on, too afraid to say anything. This was a event that had
>occurred rather frequently in the last few months, one which none of them
had to courage to try to stop.
>
The man's red eyes glowed with anger as he whipped around, causing his
>long white hair to fly up. He wasn't old in appearance, but he had lived
for several centuries. "I'll send for Nagera if this keeps up!"
>
"She can't hurt me," the young woman mumbled. "She's hurt me a lot, but
>I don't even feel her slaps anymore. Or yours. You can't make me do
anything." She lifted her head proudly, her dark blue eyes piercing
>his red ones.
>"I can make you do anything I want," he hissed. "Nagera!"
>A tall woman with chin length red hair and deep crimson eyes came in.
"What is it now?"
>
"She's refusing to cooperate again."
>
Nagera went over to the young student. "You know what I will do if you
>do not obey. Aren't you tired of being hit? Why don't you just apologize
and obey?!"
>
"I have a right to speak my mind. He's trying to force me to

learn spells

>I will never use, and trying to make me do whatever he tells me."
The girl
lifted her eyes and hissed, "I am tired of it!"

>
Nagera slapped her. "Apologize!"

>
"No."

>
She slapped her again, harder this time.

>
"Apologize!!"

>
"No!"

>
Nagera slapped her so hard that the young student was knocked from her

>chair onto the floor. The other students murmured in surprise. "You
stupid bitch," Nagera hissed. "You think you're better than all the other

>students... you don't even have a name..."

>"I have a name," she gasped as she spit out blood. "You just don't
deserve to know it." She leapt at the older woman, trying to knock her

>to the ground, but was surprised when her chin was struck by Nagera's
knee. She stumbled backward, clutching her bruised chin in her hand.

>
"You will obey us," Nagera said coldly, as she kicked the girl's ribs

>hard. A crack echoed through the chamber, barely heard over the loud
scream. "Recite the demon summon spell. Now."

>
Tears of pain flowed down the girl's pale cheeks as she gasped out the

>words, not putting in the magical energy needed to truly cast it. She
collapsed on the ground as Nagera walked away, casting Necros a disgusted

>glance as if to say "she isn't worth the effort."

>Necros grabbed her by the back of her robe and shoved her into a chair.
He slid a book in front of her and opened a page. "Read. Memorize.

>Now." He walked away.

>The girl coughed hard, sobbed, clutched her cracked ribs, and tried to
study the page. Another student came over to her. He was an elf, probably

>from Quenhol, and had been here longer than the girl. "Why don't you just
give in and do what they tell you? They wouldn't have to hurt you if you obeyed."

>"They took everything from me!" she cried. "They're forcing me to do
this and I don't know why! They said I have some 'immortal magic' or

>something dumb like that and that I have to listen to whatever they
tell me from now on! I don't want to!"

>
"Immora..." the elf murmured.

>
"What did you say?"

>
"Immora... in the Quenholtian tongue, it means 'immortal magic'. That's

>what you have. That's what you are."

>"I'm not magic," she gasped, laying her head on the table and groaning
in pain. "And I'm not immortal."

>
"Let me heal that," a human girl said, coming over to her. She gazed at

>the other with eyes swirled with green, silver, and blue, her long brown
hair fell around her shoulders.

>
"I think not, Ka'ina," the elf hissed. "You know that when you cast a

>spell with good intentions it always causes someone to fall under
your
influence..."
>
"I'm just trying to help..." Ka'ina muttered. "It's not my fault
my magic
>is so screwed up." She walked back to her seat as the elf healed the
young
human girl.
>
"You know, Immora, if they told you this you must truly be
powerful.
>Maybe you will become an archmage. Who knows?"

>She groaned as her bones slowly healed. "I doubt it... and stop
calling
me that!"
>
The elf sighed and stepped away. "Finished... and you should
know, they
>have been working on casting a spell on you when you aren't paying

attention..."
>
"What kind of a spell?"
>
"Well... it's the type that takes several exposures to take full

>effect--"

>"_What_ _kind_ _of_ _spell_?!"

>He looked down at the floor. "Forgive me," he murmured. "Memory

suppression... you probably won't even remember this
conversation..."
>Her eyes widened in shock as he continued, "At certain intervals of
time,
your memories will be wiped-- not fully, but you won't be
able to,
>well, access them. Anything important to you will be forgotten.
Then,
you will continue your life, but of course, the spell will
reactivate
>and hide the memories that you have accumulated... and it will keep

going for who knows how long. It might not even wipe _all_ your
memories,
>but only select ones."

>"Why?" she whispered to herself. "Why would they do this? They took
me
from my home... them hit me and hit me without any real
reason... I
>haven't eaten or rested in weeks... why do they keep doing these
things?"

>
"Fear," he said. "You have so much power... I can feel it. You
have so
>much..."

>Necros came back in before he could finish. He stalked over to where

the girl and elf were. "That's enough!" he hissed, grabbing the
elf's
>arm and twisting it. "You have told her too much!"

>"Master, please let me--" he begged.

>Necros's eyes flared with red light and flames consumed the elf.

>"Noooooooooo!!" she cried, trying to stop the fire. "No," she sobbed,

falling to her knees by the pile of ashes, a look of horror on
her face.
>
"What did he call you? Tell me," Necros demanded.

>
"I-Immora..." she whispered. "That's what he called me."

>
"You are that. And so much more. He told you more than you need
to know,
>and you will be punished for it." He grabbed a spellbook off a
shelf,
quickly read over a spell, and turned to her. "But first,
there's

>something else that needs to be done."

>She lowered her head as he chanted the words of a spell. She felt
her
blood boil with magical fire as the spell overtook her. She
felt
>lightheaded and dizzy, and sank down on the marble floor.

>"That spell is an immortality spell. You will never age from now on.

You will live on, and feel pain, and suffer, but you will never
have
>death's release. I will bring Nagera here soon to punish you." He
turned
and walked away. "I am tired of your constant
disobedience."
>
She lifted her eyes to him with a sneer, "If I really am
immortal now,
>I'll make sure you die for what you've done to me!"

>"Well then, you shouldn't be allowed control over your actions.
Maybe
an insanity spell that will emerge every few years..." he
said the words
>before she had a chance to guard against them. She shrieked with
rage as
the spell overtook her.
>
She sat still for a moment, shaking with anger. "No more." She
stood
>up, her pupils narrowing to slits. "No more. I will not take this

anymore!"
>
His sharp laughter stung her ears. "And what do you plan to
do--"
>
She cried out with rage and leapt at him, a dagger magically
appearing
>in her hand. His eyes widened in horror as the blade dug deeply into

his chest, piercing his heart. The other students raced over,
trying to
>get her to stop as she repeatedly struck him, tears pouring down her

cheeks as she did so. Nagera ran in and saw her, then her husband
dead
>on the ground. She stood stock still in fright as the young woman's
eyes
turned to her.
>
"You're next, Nagera!" she shouted. She started running towards
the
>auburn-haired woman.

>Nagera could see what was coming a mile away, and hastily spoke the
last
phrase of the spell to destroy the mage's memory. As the
last word left
>Nagera's lips, the young woman threw the dagger aside. Flames
consumed
Nagera's body, burning her to death. The young woman
stood, the flames
>reflecting in her tear filled eyes, watching the last of the people
that
had tormented her for four years finally die.
>
The students stood, shaking, before Ka'ina whispered, "What have
you
done?"

>The other clenched her fist. "What had to be done." She turned to
face
them. "You saw what they did to me. You know what they did.
I've done
>all of us a favor."

>Her head was pounding, she could feel her memories slipping away
already.
Her name, her true name, she had already lost. "I'm
leaving. I'm going to
>Quenhol." She sighed. "The elf called me Immora," she murmured.
"That's
the only name I have left anymore..."
>
Immora turned and walked away to the portal leading to Quenhol,

to try and
>build a new life.
>The mages watched as she left. "You'll be back," Ka'ina said to herself.
"I will bring you back. You were a friend to me whenever those two wretched beings would give everyone a chance to speak to each other.
I am not going to lose you. I am not going to lose you!"

>
>
Time: Back to the present
Place: The mage room, the palace
>
>Akeru had fallen asleep on a makeshift bed in the large room. Sharra stood by the mirror, gazing into space. Serenity was the only senshi that had stayed. She sat near Immora, watching the reflection of the candle flames dancing in the marble. "Any reaction yet?" Sharra asked softly.
>Serenity considered her answer. "She's still asleep... but her cheeks have some color in them finally. I think the spell broke through, so maybe she's remembering now, and sometimes she'll twitch, so maybe it'll be over soon. It didn't take us long to wake up."

>
Sharra came over and sat down by her. "Serenity... how old are you?"
"19..."
"How old were you in the Original Time?"
"When it ended, I was almost 20."
"And the Silver Millennium?"
"18... why are you asking me all this?"
"The spell was sorcery, not magic. Humans are gifted with magic, while Elves are given sorcery, so our separate groups react different to a spell depending on what type it is. It took me that whole hour to see my 2,500 plus years of life, since the spell was of the type I am attuned to, but since you are given magic, it took you an hour to see around 60 years. That's about a year a minute. Immora has almost 3,000 years to see."
Serenity's eyes widened in shock. "Three THOUSAND?!?! She's THAT old?!"
"Yes, she is. Didn't you realize that?"
Serenity sat there for a long time. "But Akeru... she's around 20 something, right? I mean, they seem to really love each other, but they're so far apart in age..."
Sharra chuckled slightly. "Not really... Immora stopped aging when she was around 19. Not just physically either. Immora can gain knowledge, but unlike the elderly, her mind stays perfectly clear, and she still has a more youthful outlook and sharp memory of the things that haven't been wiped out by the spell as opposed to the more senile view and fuzzy memory. Akeru stopped aging who knows when. I don't know how old she is, but she isn't nearly as young in years as she looks."

>
Serenity puzzled over that for a moment. "So how long will it take for
>Immora to see all her memories?"

>Sharra closed her eyes and calculated. "About 2 days, if she's able to
see all of her memories, when she does start seeing them."

>
"But she just woke up from her coma! Now she's missing out _again_!"
>Serenity protested.

>Akeru stirred and woke up. "uhhhn... what's going on?" she mumbled,
rubbing her eyes.
>
"Sharra says it will take 2 days for Immora to see all those memories,
>whenever she does start seeing them!"

>Akeru's eyes widened. "Are you serious, Cloria?!?!"

>Sharra looked at her. "Yes, I am. And don't call me that."

>"Sorry... but it's just..." Akeru sighed loudly. "When I came here for
that ball, it had been... let's see, thirty, maybe forty years since
>I'd last seen her. Not even ten minutes later, she battled Mistress Nine
and was thrown into that eight month coma. Ever since she woke up
>several hours ago, she's been working on recovering. I barely have had
the chance to talk to her. Now she's unconscious _again_..."

>
Serenity came over to Akeru and gave her a hug. "C'mon... it's okay...
>I kinda know how you feel. Endymion's back on Earth for some military
training and I can't see or talk to him for the next few months. I know
>where he is, but I can't be with him. I know this is hard on you, but
you're going to have to accept it... but you have to realize that she
>_will_ wake up. She _will_.

>"Thank you," Akeru said. "Really, I mean it."

>Serenity grinned. "Hey, being nice is what I do. And if it makes you
feel happier, then I'm glad."
>
Akeru laughed slightly. "How long are you planning to stay here?"
>
"How long are _you_ planning to stay here?"
>
Akeru blinked in surprise. "Um, until she wakes up... but why--"

>
"Then that's how long I will stay. You'll probably need the company."
>Serenity settled down further into the cushions. "So, Akeru, tell me how
you met Immora. I've always wondered about that."
>

>
Time: in a memory, over four thousand years ago
>Place: in a memory, on Quenhol

>

>She looked around the market with a smile on her face. Quenhol was such
a beautiful world. She'd been here for the past-- she didn't know. She
>kept forgetting things. This world was so much prettier than the world
she had vague memories of-- what was it, Earth? She was in the capital
>city, Immonu, or "Eternal City" in that language that she could remember.
The people here talked so different. This place was so different. The

>sky was always bright blue unless it was night, and then the stars
and
moons were so bright that you could easily see where you
walked. Even
>when it rained, the sky was still blue. Trees were enormous,
hundreds
of feet tall, with huge, wide trunks. Houses were formed
in the holes
>in the trunk. Rivers flowed across the branches. Trees of every
color
dotted the land. The lakes were always clean and sparkling,
the air always
>fresh to breathe. Even the rich green grass was beautiful. Immora
walked
and listened, enjoying the sights and sounds of the place
she'd come to
>call home.

>"Yoyta te! Crystali nomi etu! Esarul nors clo en ana aerto!"

>"Aa justiel! Ka'irana kultari ju sayat..."

>"Moapo shar belihty e'me..."

>"Hey, let go of that! It's mine!"

>Immora looked around in surprise. Had she really heard someone talk
in that
language? Not Quenholitan?
>
"Justiel," she apologized as she pushed her way through the
crowd, looking
>for the source of the voice. "Gamani ye..." She stopped short when
she saw
a thin young woman chasing after a boy that had
apparently stolen something
>from her. The woman had short, pure black hair, fair, gold tinged
skin, and
dark brown eyes that were slanted like the Elves's
eyes, even though she was
>clearly human. She drew in a breath sharply; the woman was very
beautiful,
and there was something about her that seemed
familiar. Immora had the
>strangest feeling when she saw her and was sure that this was the
one who
spoke in the language of Earth, for she could vaguely
remember some people
>on Earth having eyes like that.

>She started running after the woman and the boy. The woman kept

screaming stop, but of course the boy didn't understand. Immora
shouted,
>"Yoyta kanta!" then, "Please stop!"

>Both the boy and the woman stopped. Immora slowed down and stopped
when
she came close to them, gasping for air. She was never used
to physical
>exertion. "Please... tell me... what happened," she breathed.

>"He stole my necklace!" the woman said, glaring at the boy who
didn't
understand her words.
>
"You want it back, I assume?" Immora pushed her hair out of her
face,
>pulling the sleeves of her thick black dress away from her arms to

cool herself down.
>
"Yeah," the woman said, brushing her bangs back from her face.
"Why'd
>you come after us?"

>"I heard you speak in this language, so I realized you must be
from...
that world... what's it called?"
>
"Earth? Yeah, I am, but I have no idea how I got here..."

>
Immora laughed slightly. "Yeah, that's it... and all you have to
do is
>ask and he'll return the necklace."

>"I can't speak that language."

>Immora laughed. "I'll translate. Tell me what to tell him."

>"Um... please give me back the necklace?"

>Immora turned to the boy. "Yoyta sayat neresu ju pekala lanada."

>The boy shyly handed her the necklace. "Tok pekala lanada Aa justiel."

>Immora smiled and handed the necklace back to the woman as the boy ran
off. "Here you go. You really need to learn the language..."

>
As she fastened it around her neck, the woman said, "I heard both of
you say a phrase... what was it? Peh-kah-lah lah-nah-dah? What did
the
two of you say anyways?"
>
Immora covered her mouth and giggled. "I told him 'Please give
the
necklace to the pretty lady,' and he said 'tell the pretty lady I'm

sorry'."
>
The woman colored slightly. "'Pretty lady', eh? Well, thanks
for
getting my necklace back."

>She turned to walk away, but Immora grabbed her arm and said,
"Please
wait! Look, you don't know this place well, and you don't
know the
language, so you'll need some help getting around... I'm willing to
help
you."
>
"Um, I guess... thanks... what's your name?"
>
"I'm... well, people call me Immora, because I can't remember my
real
name. You?"

>"I go by Akeru. My real name is a secret." she said, holding out her
hand.
Immora took it to shake, and was surprised when Akeru bent
over and kissed
her hand gently. "But maybe I'll tell you someday," she added.

>Immora blushed slightly. "Um, my house is... this way..." She turned
and
stumbled slightly.
>
Akeru laughed. "What's wrong? Not used to having that happen?"

>
Immora nodded. "People never really make gestures like kissing
on the
hands around here. Things are quite different here than they are on

Earth, if I remember Earth correctly. It's been a long time since
I
lived there."

>Akeru cocked her eyebrow. "You don't seem old enough to start
forgetting
things easily. You look to be eighteen, but you act
more mature than
that."

>Immora clutched her head. Why couldn't she remember... "Actually
I'm--"

>She felt dizzy suddenly, and could feel herself falling but she
couldn't
stop it. Her head pounded, her eyes couldn't see quite
right. Her magical
senses were out of control, and she was sensing every bit of
energy
that flowed around her. She couldn't regain control of her
senses. Then
>strong arms were around her to stop her from falling.

>"Hey, are you okay? Tell me where your house is and I'll bring you

there."

>Immora mumbled directions and Akeru carried her in her arms to the house.
She pushed the door open with her foot, then brought Immora over to the

>couch and gently laid her down. She searched for a kitchen, and was
surprised when she found a small pond in a room. She dipped a cloth in

>it, then brought it over and set it on Immora's head. Brushing the blond
hair from the mage's face, she asked her, "Are you alright? You almost

>passed out."

>Immora closed her eyes, trying to ease the throbbing in her head. "It's
just a little bit of dizziness that I get once in awhile..."

>
"Maybe I should go get help--"

>
"No! I mean... no, please stay here... I really don't like being left

>alone when these things happen... ow... my head..."

>"That dress you're wearing is a really thick material, you might have
a heat stroke. Take it off, I'll go find you something a bit more

>lightweight."

>Akeru walked off into what looked to be Immora's room and looked for a
closet. Immora held her head in her hands to steady herself, then

>slipped off her dress and wrapped a blanket around herself. Akeru
returned, tossed her a thin white dress, and turned around to wait for

>Immora to change.

>"could i have a glass of water?" Immora asked weakly as she lay back
down.

>
"Sure, where are the glasses?"

>
"in the cabinet near the water drip."

>
Akeru returned, but didn't give Immora the glass. She brought the

>glass to the mage's lips and told her to drink. "You might drop it if
you try holding it," she said.

>
Immora nodded and gently pushed the glass away when she was done. "I'm

>really sorry to trouble you like this... we just met and all..."

>"It's alright. You're the only one here that can understand what I
say, so I had better keep near you. So, you were saying something

>about your age?"

>Immora smiled. "Yeah, I'm not really 18. I'm 1,000."

>Akeru's eyes widened. "No... way... you look too young... and you act
like..."

>
Immora laughed. "I know, I know, I don't age physically or mentally..."

>and I don't act my age either... but I don't feel like I'm that old,
so why act like I am?"

>
Akeru smiled. "That makes perfect sense. But how is it that you're this

>old?"

>"Well, I--" Immora stopped. Images flashed through her mind, of Necros
and Nagera... blood... fire... Immora closed her eyes tight and tried

>to shut out the images flooding into her... she was surprised when
suddenly she felt hands close around her arms, trying to

steady her it
>seemed, from the way she clutched her.
>"W-What?"
>"You were screaming and shaking! What's wrong?"
>Immora blinked. "I... was... I don't... I can't..." Immora pressed her hand to her forehead. "What's wrong with me?" she whispered in a choked voice. "What did they do to me?" she sobbed.
>
She covered her face with her hands as she started crying, then Akeru's arms encircled her and pulled her close, her warm voice speaking soothing words to calm her down. "I-I'm sorry," Immora said. "I get these...
>
visions... sometimes..."
>
"It's perfectly alright," Akeru said. "Just calm down... relax...
>everything's going to be okay."
>Immora closed her eyes tight and cried against her, sobbing until she was almost too weak to move. "I... I think I should go... go to bed..."
>Immora pulled away and stumbled towards her room. "You can use the guest room... go ahead..." she fell against her bed, falling asleep
>almost immediately despite the swarm of thoughts running through her mind.
>
>
Time: in a memory, three months later
>Place: in a memory, on Quenhol
>
>What season was equivalent to summer was starting to set in on Quenhol, and the heat was starting to be unbearable. Immora irritably noted that
>this was the hottest day she'd felt in the hundreds of years she'd lived
on the planet. Today she was supposed to go to the palace, a long trek
>despite the fact it was in this city. She was supposed to meet the new queen, who was very young to rise to this position, and to place a spell
>of protection on her during her coronation ceremony. Immora had heard the queen was only 26, but since it was based on popular vote, she figure she
>couldn't really complain.
>She was busy studying the spell when she heard a yawn from behind her.
She turned around and smiled to Akeru, who'd just woken up. The woman
>had been living here with her several months and had adjusted fairly well to the new surroundings, but still had trouble trying to talk to
>anyone since very few people knew Earth language. "It feels really hot
out," she commented. "Does it normally get this hot here?"
>
"No, this is the hottest it's been in the past... oh, 900 something
>years," Immora turned back to the book and wrinkled her nose. "This spell is so annoying to learn! The book doesn't give any indication of
>how to pronounce it, and I am not good at all with sorcery."

>Akeru laughed. "You'll figure it out, you're a very intelligent woman.
I'll be right back, I'm going over to your neighbors' for

a moment."

>
Immora nodded and wistfully watched her walk outside. Akeru was such a kind, thoughtful person, and in the past several months, Immora had grown
very close to her. She had told her all about her life--what she could

>still remember of it-- and was always honest with her. She wasn't sure
yet just how much this woman meant to her, but she already felt as if

>she couldn't live without her friendship.

>Immora's eyes drifted to the pages again, trying to memorize the words.
She almost had it, if she just repeated it several more times... she

>whispered the phrases softly to herself, not putting any magical energy
in them for fear the spell would form prematurely, or if she

>mispronounced it, one she didn't mean to cast would happen. She knew
from experience that when she did finally get it correct, there would

>be a rush of magic in her that would indicate that this was indeed the
right pronunciation.

>
She was so busy studying the words she didn't notice Akeru come back

>in. Akeru sat down beside her and looked at her quizzically, but before
she could ask what Immora was doing, Immora warned her to be quiet. She

>continued to mouth the words.

>She was trying them for the eleventh try when a touch on the back of
her neck made her jump in surprise. Akeru gently brushed her long hair

>off her neck and began to gather it into a ponytail. She coughed
slightly. "Sorry, but you looked very warm so I thought you might want

>to get the hair off your neck."

>"Um... that's okay..." Immora said softly. She almost forgot about the
spell as she sat trembling slightly at the feeling of Akeru's fingers

>brushing against her neck. She cursed herself for being so embarrassed
at the simple gesture of kindness.

>
"There, is that better?"

>
Immora blinked slightly. "Oh, um, yes, thanks... I... I need to finish

>this spell..."

>"Why don't you ask that lady... what's her name? to help you with it.
She seems to know a lot about magic and sorcery and things."

>
"What lady? There's a lot of people around here who use magic and sorcery."

>
"That one purple Elf lady."

>
Immora frowned. "Oh yeah, her. I can never remember her name. I can't keep

>track of everyone's names. There's too many people in this city!"

>Akeru laughed. "You're right about that. When do you have to leave for
the palace?"

>
Immora looked out the window at the sun. "In an hour... damnit, I need to

>learn that spell!"

>"Well, like I said, ask her for help so you can learn it before we
leave for the palace."

>
" 'We'? I didn't know you were coming too," Immora teased.

>
Akeru grinned. "Of course I am. If you go off to the palace, I'll be

>lost. No one would understand what I said. Besides, I'd miss you.
You'll probably have to stay a few days for the ceremonies and all."

>
Immora nodded slightly. "I guess we should go to her now."

>
"Yup. Have you packed at all for the trip?"

>
Immora nodded again. "I- We'll come get the things before it's time

>to leave. You should probably pack too--oh! I forgot! We'll need some
food for the trip... Get some paper and write this down."

>
Akeru grabbed a paper and pen, then wrote down the words Immora said.

>"This is all Quenholtian isn't it?" she asked. "I don't understand any
of what you told me."

>
"The first two lines are how you ask to purchase something. Then tell

>him the other items. That last one--yeah, the one you're pointing to--
you say that to let him know that I'll pay him later for it. He should

>know you don't speak the language."

>"Okay, see you soon?"

>"Yeah."

>Immora walked outside with Akeru, then walked in the other direction
while Akeru went to get the food. She felt nervous going to the

>sorceress's house. The woman was at least five thousand years her
senior, incredibly skilled in sorcery. Immora was worried that the

>woman would frown upon her asking for help with a spell like this. She
was about to turn around and go back home when it struck her-- the

>spell really wasn't magic, it was sorcery, something that humans could
almost never learn without an Elf's help, which Immora would need to

>learn the spell. Had Akeru realized this when she made the suggestion?
She _was_ incredibly bright, but did she really know anything about

>sorcery and magic? Immora had sometimes sensed an unusual energy within
her, but could never pinpoint what it was. Could she have abilities in

>those fields?

>Immora continued on and was surprised when the sorceress opened the
door before she knocked. "Come in," she said. "Welcome."

>
Immora stood frozen in shock a moment. "How did you know that la--"

>
"I study it some. Try to learn what I can. Not easy. Odd way of speak.

>I not very good at it yet, will get better."

>Immora slowly nodded her head. Well, if I can learn hers, she can learn
mine, she reasoned. Still, it was unnerving to hear a Quenholtian

>speak an Earth tongue though.

>"Something wrong?"

>"No," she lied, "I was just trying to remember your name."

>"Lorenada. No stand there more, come in."

>Immora walked in after the woman, taking awhile to look over her to etch
her appearance and name in her mind. She'd have to check the records
>back at the mage study to see if she was listed, so she'd need to remember
them. Lorenada was one of the Pure Elves, she noted. The Elf's ears rose
>to points, unlike Forest Elves, who's pointed ears slanted out to the
sides. Lorenada had lavender skin, long purple hair with a slight
>magenta tinge, and royal purple eyes that had a definite slant to them
similar to Akeru's, with a small mole under the inside corner of her
>right eye. She was tall and thin, even for an Elf. She wore a silky
magenta dress with several arcane markings on it. Six silver earrings
>decorated her left ear, each shaped like a sharp tooth, while the other
ear had a chain attached to her lobe and then to a cuff higher on her ear.
>
"Ellae..." Immora breathed when she entered the woman's study. In typical
>Quenholtian fashion, she lived in a house formed by a hollow in a tree,
but she'd taken extra care to polish the wood on the walls and ceiling,
>and to add marble to her floors. Rich tapestries decorated the walls,
along with dark blue and crimson rugs, curtains, and furniture. Crystal
>balls for communications were resting in silver stands, along with
several long shelves filled with books.
>
"[It is beautiful!]" Immora said in the Quenholtian language.

>
"[Ah, good, you are speaking _our_ language. I find yours cumbersome
>and irritating.]"

>"[I've spoken Quenholtian far longer than 'my' language. I'm quite fluent.]"

>"[What about the young woman that's been with you these past few months?
Does she know any?]"
>
Immora stopped short, shocked by the sudden question. "[You've seen her
>with me?]"

>"[Yes, I watch over all that happens in this city. What was her name?
I could never pronounce it.]"
>
"Akeru."
>
"[Eh? What does that mean?]"
>
Immora sat down in a chair across from Lorenada and considered her answer.
>"[I am not entirely sure. I don't really know the language, but I remember
some words. I believe it means 'sunrise', if I _do_ remember correctly.]"
>
"[Don't all Terrans speak the same language?]"
>
"[Not entirely. She doesn't realize it, I don't think, that Quenhol runs
>on a different sort of time than Earth. Did you know that we can live
thousands of years here, then go to Earth in the same time we left?]
>Earth, while we're on this world, will age, but we can always travel
back to where we started. Right now, though, Earth is farther into the

>future. The time she came from is the same one I did-- a thousand years
ago, to us. Everyone speaks one tongue on Earth now, but she isn't from
>that Earth, she's from mine. I speak with her in a language called

English.]"
>
"[You didn't tell her about the time flow?]"
>
"[No... I forgot to... I have never really found time for it anyways.]"
>
Lorenada sighed. "[You need to find time... or bring the
Guardian of
>Time in to explain... I believe she doesn't like how our planet is

separate from the time she's used to controlling... What did you
come
>here for anyways?]"

>"[I'm trying to learn a protection spell to place on the new queen,

but it's sorcery--]"
>
"[I understand. She'll probably need it... either that or one of
us
>would have to teach her magic or sorcery so she can protect
herself.]"

>"[Why me though? Why am I the one who should place the spell on
her?]"

>"[They would have picked me--a sorceress-- to do it, but a mage has

never been in a royal ceremony before. They wanted a wellknown
mage
>to do it. You are the oldest mage alive, don't you know that?]"

>Immora shook her head. "[I didn't. What is the queen's name
anyways?]"

>"[Clorianostriana.]"

>"[What a name!]"

>"[I know, she goes by Sharra more commonly though.]"

>Not long after that, Lorenada explained the spell to her and how to

speak it, and Immora left and went back to her house, telling
Lorenada
>thank you as she left. She returned to see Akeru sitting on the
couch,
all the items they'd packed sitting around her. She smiled
sheepishly
>at Immora. "I got the things... but I think I made a fool of myself
in
front of the man at the store."
>
"Why do you say that?"
>
"Well, I got the groceries okay, but then when I was trying to
get
>these I had some difficulty, and I tried to say the word but I guess

I said the wrong thing and it took me awhile to get it right--"

>
"What are you referring to, that you were trying to say?"

>
"Close your eyes."
>
Immora raised her eyebrow, but complied. "Okay, open them."

>
Immora was surprised to see Akeru now standing in front of her,
holding
>several flowers of a type Immora had never seen before in her hand.

"Akeru, what did you get these for?" Akeru handed them to her and
Immora
>stood staring at her.

>
"I thought you'd like them. Do you?"
>
"Yes, I do..." Immora looked down at them. These are very
rare... she

>thought to herself. Waitaminute, I told her to tell them I'd pay for

everything--
>
"In case you're wondering, I've been saving some money I earned

>helping our neighbors in their garden. Took me two months,
but--"

>Akeru stopped as Immora hugged her tightly. "Thank you," she
whispered.
"I really appreciate it."
>
Akeru blushed slightly. "Um, you're welcome."
>
Immora placed them in a stasis crystal in her room, then came
back
>into the main room. "Well, I guess we should go. We're going to have
to
walk, so we should bring some packs."
>
Immora got the packs from her room, and was putting items in
them when
>Akeru told her, "You're going to have a heat stroke again, wearing
those
thick black dresses of yours. Especially on a day like
this, you should
>really wear something more lightweight."

>Immora considered it a moment. She was right, after all. Immora
often
had dizzy spells and the heat only made them worse... Akeru
was prepared
>for it, unlike her. She'd worn lightweight cotton pants and a thin
white
shirt, while Immora was standing there like a fool in a
long, thick dress.
>
"Can you finish my packing while I go change?"
>
"No problem."
>
Immora came back wearing a pale blue cotton dress. "Okay, I'm
ready to go."
>She picked up her packs and strapped them onto her back. "By the
way,
Lorenada told me how to say the spell."
>
"Oh really? That's good. One less thing to worry about, eh?"

>
Immora laughed as they left her house. "Yes, it is. And once she
told
>me it, it was so easy to remember. I felt silly asking her."

>Akeru laughed with her as they entered the forest that led to the

castle. "I hate trying to talk to people around here; no one
understands
>me!"

>"How did the neighbors know you wanted to help then?"

>Akeru shrugged. "She was working in the garden, so I came over and

started helping. She tried to talk but she could tell I didn't

>understand. When we were done, she gave me some money. The next day,

I came back. She paid me again. It kept going on until I had
enough
>money to buy the flowers. I never asked for pay, but since she
was
giving me money, I decided I should buy you something with
it."
>
Immora's eyes widened in surprise as they crossed a stream.
"That was
>very nice of you to do that for me... I want to thank you, but I
don't
know how... I know! The protection spell I learned... after
the
>ceremony, I'll put it on you."

>"What is that spell for anyways?" she asked.

>Immora lowered her head as they continued walking. "It's supposed to

keep you from receiving extensive physical harm... it only works

to a

>certain extent, but it's very helpful... I don't want you to be hurt, ever,
that's why I want you to give it to you. I know it's not really much--"

>
Akeru walked over closer to where she was. "It means alot to me..."

>what you just said. Thank you."

>Immora felt oddly nervous after that. "Um, you're welcome." She watched
the ground as she walked, aware of Akeru walking next to her. It was

>silent, with only the sounds of the animals living in the forest to hear.
She felt like she had to say something, do something, anything to break

>the silence. She slowly reached her hand over to Akeru's and gently
clasped in. She felt Akeru tense up at first, as if startled, then

>after a few moments she squeezed Immora's hand back.

>"You alright?" Akeru asked, looking around in the trees as they walked.

>"I'm fine..." Immora said slowly, even more nervous than before. Her
hand almost slipped from Akeru's, and she looked up at her face slowly.

>Akeru looked calm at first glance, but as Immora studied her face she
noticed a faint blush on her cheeks. "You're blushing," she whispered

>softly, barely enough to be heard.

>Akeru looked over to her. "Am I?" she asked with a faint smile.

>"Yes, you are." Immora turned away, looking at anything that caught her
eye... the waterfall dropping off the ledge next to them, the shadows

>in the trees, silhouettes of animals in the distance. "Why are you?"

>"Huh?"

>"Why're you blushing? I'm guessing it's because I'm holding your hand...
why does that make you blush?"

>
Akeru's pace slowed to a stop. "Immora... I..." Her fingers slid away

>from Immora's as she turned away, clutching her arms in her hands.

"I
think I--"

>
Before she could finish, Immora heard a noise and whirled around. That

>noise she heard behind them, it sounded like a knife being unsheathed--

>She gasped in shock as a woman leapt from the trees and knocked Akeru
to the ground. She twirled around and kicked Immora's legs, painfully

>dropping her to the ground too. Her knife was at Immora's throat,
keeping her from moving.

>
"Let her go!" Akeru shouted in a horrified voice.

>
"I think not," the woman said, surprisingly speaking the Earth tongue

>fluently. "I've been told to kill both of you."

>Immora trembled, too afraid to try to cast a spell. The woman looked to
be half human, half Forest Elf, and would undoubtedly know she was

>trying to use her magic. She had bright red hair which she wore in an
unusual style--it was pushed back from her face, except for a small

>section falling across her right temple, then parted in the center,

with the sections of hair that probably normally reached her chin

>rising up in the air. Her skin was pale green, like many Forest Elves'
skin, but her ears had only small points to them, not long enough to be a

>true Forest Elf. Her dark emerald eyes lined with thick forest green
liner had a slight slant, her eyebrows also slanting, but the shape of

>her face, the low cheekbones and downturned nose, along with the thin,
dark green painted lips were distinctly human. She was thin, but also

>muscular, the nearly black leather tinged green she wore clinging to her
like a second skin, with a light brown trench coat that was very long in the

>back with the sleeves rolled up to her elbows worn over her bodysuit.
A second bodysuit, this one light brown, covered her chest partially in

>an "m" shape, was tight around her torso but baggy in the legs where
she tucked it into her tall dark boots. The small green circles that

>went down the front of her dark bodysuit along with the sides of her arms
and legs marked her as an assassin. Immora closed her eyes tightly and

>tried not to scream. She tried to remind herself that she couldn't be
killed... but then she could imagine just how painful it would be, to

>be wounded so horribly and to not be granted death.

>"Please, let her go! Don't do this!" Akeru pleaded in a voice dripping
with fear. "You can't kill her, so please don't try!"

>
The assassin only laughed. "Whether she will die or not, it is my job

>to at least try."

>Immora gasped in pain as the woman drew her knife across the side of
her neck, not deep enough to cause major bleeding, but the stinging

>sensation was terrible.

>"Leave her alone!" Akeru screamed. Immora looked to her and saw she was
close to tears. Akeru fumbled in her pack and pulled out a metal object

>... a gun. "Let her go or I'll KILL YOU!!"

>The woman chuckled and pressed the knife near the front of Immora's
throat. Immora gulped, and felt sweat drip down her forehead. Akeru's

>hands trembled, barely managing to keep a grip on her weapon that she
was aiming at the assassin's head. Her face was drawn tight with fear,

>the beads of sweat obvious as she bit her lip. "I-I'm warning you--
don't try anything else--"

>
"Drop the gun," the assassin hissed. "If you don't, I'll kill her

>right now."

>Akeru stood still in fright, then she lowered the gun and dropped it on
her ground. She buried her head in her hands and sobbed.

>
Immora felt a dull ache go through her. She wanted to run over to Akeru

>and hold her tight and comfort her. She only vaguely heard a voice say
to the assassin, "Hurry up and do it, E'melok," before she realized that

>she was drawing in her magic. She fearfully stopped as the knife pressed

into her skin slightly.

>

>"You just sit right there and don't move," E'melok hissed as she walked

over to Akeru.

>
"Don't hurt her!" Immora cried. "She hasn't done anything to harm you!"

>
E'melok laughed and kicked Akeru in the side. Akeru cried out in pain

>and tried to pull away as E'melok grabbed her arm. "Don't struggle too

much, there's a river next to you that leads to a very long waterfall,

>and I am sure you wouldn't want to go off it."

>E'melok kicked Akeru again, then slapped her across the face. Immora

trembled hard, trying not to cry as she watched. Finally, she had seen

>enough. She couldn't take it anymore. E'melok continued to hit Akeru,
not noticing that Immora was quickly drawing in her magic. Immora leapt

>at E'melok, fire blazing around her. E'melok screamed as the flames bit

into her skin, but managed to shove Akeru into the river as she tried

>to fight off Immora.

>Immediately, Immora turned to dive into the river after her, not
noticing that E'melok had slashed her across the back with her knife.

>She dove into the river, trying to swim to Akeru, but her skirt was
dragging her and she couldn't swim in the fast current. Akeru barely

>kept above the water, gasping for air as she kicked her legs to remain

above the surface. Immora felt herself being dragged under and couldn't

>do anything to stop it. Her neck and back burned with pain as the cold

water bit into her wounds. She was thrown against a rock by the current,

>and couldn't work up the strength to keep herself above the surface.
She was pulled under the water, her lungs feeling like they'd burst

>from lack of oxygen. She tried to push herself up but was too weak.
She felt herself brush against something underwater-- was it Akeru?--

>as she plummeted down the waterfall to the water below.

>

>It felt like hours later when she opened her eyes. She'd washed up on

the shore. The sun was beating down on her, and had already dried her.

>Waves gently lapped at her feet. She was aware of someone beside her,
breathing deeply. She closed her eyes, trying to block out the light.

>Her magical senses felt like they were on fire, and she couldn't help

but feel the energy running through everything around her-- the water,

>the forests, herself... when she could feel the energy coming from the

person next to her, she realized it was Akeru. There was something

>distinctive about her energy, Immora noticed, a certain note in it that

was unique to her.

>
"I-Immora?" came a cracked whisper.

>
Immora rolled over on her side to see her friend was also exhausted.

>"Are you alright?"
>"I don't know," Immora admitted in a soft whisper. "I feel awful..."
>She lay there, gazing into Akeru's beautiful eyes, aware of Akeru's gaze on her at the same time. She felt a slight ache go through her,>but it wasn't the one of pain she'd felt earlier. "Akeru..." she whispered. "I..."
>
She stopped, her voice leaving her as Akeru sat up, pulling her against her as she wrapped her arms around her. Immora returned her embrace, burying her head against her as she fought tears, pressing her cheek to hers. Akeru whispered soothing words to her as she stroked her knotted hair. Immora whispered in a choked voice, "I didn't want you to be hurt... I didn't want her to kill you... and look what happened... you could have drowned or something in that waterfall..."

>She felt Akeru's tears against her cheek. "I didn't want you to be hurt either... Immora, I don't want you to ever be hurt, not by anyone, not in any way... you mean too much to me."
>
They lay staring at each other for a little bit, neither wanting to speak for the moment.
>"I love you," Akeru said after a few moments. "I was too afraid to tell you any sooner, but I love you, fully and completely..."

>"I love you too," Immora returned. "I wasn't sure for a long time...
>I've never loved anyone before... but ... oh god... Akeru, you're everything to me..."
>
Akeru kissed her forehead gently. "And you're everything to me... thank you... for being here for me..."
>
Immora felt a blush rise through her cheeks. "Thank you... for all that you've done for me..." Immora shut her eyes, wrapping her arms tighter around Akeru. Akeru stopped stroking her hair and pressed her hand to the back of Immora's head. Then her soft, warm lips were against Immora's, kissing her gently as Immora slid her arms around Akeru's neck and returned the kiss with deep passion. Her tongue darted into Akeru's mouth as the other woman pulled her closer to her. She closed her eyes tight, wishing for the kiss to never end. Finally, they pulled away from each other and rested their heads against each other.
>
Akeru smiled at her and Immora shyly smiled back. They lay there, holding each other, until they drifted away into sleep.
>
>"[Immora? Wake up. *ahem* Please wake up, Immora.] "
>"Huh?" Immora stirred and woke up to see three of the Royal Guards standing over her and Akeru. The two human males, accompanied by an female Forest Elf, watched her as she sat up further. She winced in pain, her hand trailing to her neck where she'd been cut, noting

the

>numbness in her back from the cut she hadn't felt earlier. Akeru

remained cuddled against her, still asleep, as Immora looked up
at the

>guards. She looked around and noticed it was almost dusk--how long
had
they been asleep? "[What are you here for?]" she asked
coldly.

>
"[Well, you were supposed to have arrived a few hours ago for
the

>coronation ceremony, so we'll probably have to wait until much later
or
tomorrow to have it. Please stand up and wake up your
friend.]"

>
Immora gently nudged Akeru until she woke up. "Hmmm? What's
going on?

>It's almost sunset???"

>"Three of the Royal Guards are here since we were late. Stand
up."

>They both stood up and the Forest Elf guard looked them over.
Immora's
wounds had scabbed lightly, and bruises stood out on
Akeru's skin.

>"[You've been attacked, I see. By whom?]"

>"[An assassin by the name of E'melok.]"

>The Forest Elf looked immediately to the other two guards. "[I am

surprised you survived the attack! She is a very dangerous woman,

>quickly rising in the ranks of the Assassins' Guild. We'd heard they

might try to kill someone before the ceremony, but we never
thought

>they really would.]"

>Immora's eyes flickered slightly and she raised an eyebrow, almost
in
amusement. "[And why would they send her to kill me? Why
would they

>involve Akeru?]"

>"[They probably felt that if you were killed, the queen would be
left
vulnerable and they'd be able to move in easily to kill you.
I don't

>know why they would attack this woman who's with you though. You
need
to come with us now, the ceremony's been delayed long enough
already...

>and you both need healing.]"

>As the guards turned to lead them, Akeru asked Immora, "What just

happened?"

>
Immora laughed slightly, "They told me that E'melok tried to
kill us to

>sabotage the ceremony, and that they came to find us because we're
so late.
We to go with them to the palace for the ceremony and to
receive healing."

>
"I really need to learn this language," Akeru mumbled
irritably as

>they started to walk behind the guards.

>Immora laughed again and took her hand. "I could ask someone to make
a
translation crystal for you. I would make one if I knew how,
but they

>are difficult to make. They could translate people's words in your
mind
for you, and whatever you say will come out sounding to
others as being

>their own language. It only works when you want it to."

>"Sounds like a handy thing to have."

>"It is. I had one when I first came here, but not long after I

finished
learning the language, it broke."

>
"Huh, that's odd... Hey, if we were so late, how come they aren't more upset about it? It is important, right?"

>Immora grinned at her. "Quenholtians are funny about things like time.
They try hard to be punctual, but if you end up being late, it's really no big deal. We could have turned up three days late and they would have
waited the whole time for us."

>
"That's unusual... I guess it worked in our favor though."

>
"Well, the Quenholtians do tend to think in ways that work to the advantage of everyone. Quite nice, if you ask me."

>They continued to follow the guards, talking quietly with each other,
until Immora asked them to stop. "[Is something wrong?]" one of the guards asked.

>"[Ahhh... my back... ow... sorry, the cuts sting bad...] Akeru, you still have your pack, did you happen to bring any medicine with you?"

>
"No, sorry," Akeru said. "I didn't think we'd need any."

>
"[I know a bit of sorcery,]" the Forest Elf said. "[Would you like me to heal them? You might have been poisoned you know. Your friend can wait, but you can't if you are.]"

>
Immora nodded as the woman came over and said the words of the spell.

>The wounds healed slowly. "[I'm surprised that spell took so long. Where do
you draw energy from?]"

>
"[I tend to align my magic with the forests, and one type of tree in particular has healing properties. I drew on the power of those trees.]"

>"[Who was your teacher?]"

>"[Lorenada, why?]"

>Immora frowned. "[A powerful sorceress like her shouldn't waste her time
teaching, and I would expect her to do a better job. She should have told you that using trees for healing energy is absurd.]"

>"[Er, do you know her?]" the Elf asked.

>"[It doesn't concern you, now does it?]"

>"[Oh. We should continue on.]"

>They continued to walk through the woods until they reached the palace.
Akeru's eyes widened in shock at the sprawling grounds. "What do you think?" Immora asked her.

>"It's wonderful!" Akeru said in awe.

>The palace itself covered a few miles of space and was made of marble
and crystal, with tall spires stretching towards the sky and domed roofs, several murals decorating the walls. The grounds around the palace were filled with gardens and small shops, some temporary huts while others were more permanent. All types of Quenholtians-- Humans,
Pure Elves, Forest Elves, Katrisa, and even a few Dragana-- walked among the buildings, talking, doing business, and preparing for the ceremony. The palace had stood for thousands of years, and was

open

>to all but a few. People turned to watch them as they entered the
grounds through a gate in front, for the ground were surrounded by a

>high wall. Several people dropped to their knees, others trying to push
their way over, while the rest ignored them.

>
"[We'll be entering through the east doors,]" one of the guards said

>as he led them to a large wooden door with carvings on it. "[Then
proceed down the hall until you reach the ninth door on the right.]"

>
"[You can leave us,]" Immora said as she walked down the hall with Akeru

>following her.

>"I'm assuming we are going to a room somewhere?" Akeru asked.

>"Yep. I have to prepare for the ceremony. A guard told me while we were
walking here that they would announce our arrival and the ceremony would

>start a few hours following. I need to change and they'll probably give us
some food."

>
"Oh... hey, Immora? Why were all those people trying to get over to

>where we were, and some of those people started kneeling and all when
we walked in? Are they really so surprised to see people?"

>
Immora tightened her lips as they approached the door. "No, not

>surprised to see people, surprised to see me."

>"Why would they be?"

>Immora sighed and opened the door. "Akeru... I haven't really told you
this... I'm quite well known on this world, for many things both good

>
and bad. Everyone except for the newborns and those who have lost their

>memories know who I am. I have been a sort of ambassador between the
mages and the government. Some people even have started some strange

>sort of worshipping towards me. I rarely go into heavily populated areas
to avoid the attention, and that's why I live out in the woods. They

>are surprised to see me because of that."

>They entered the room in silence. Five women sat in there, three humans,
a Pure Elf, and a Forest Elf. Immora didn't recognize either of the Elves,

>but could tell by their clothing that they were assistants to whoever would
be at the palace as a guest, two of the humans seemed to be dressmakers

>of some sort, but the other human... she didn't look Quenholtian at all.
Her hair was long and dark green, pulled back in a bun with the loose

>ends hanging down to her waist, with deeply tanned skin and crimson eyes.
She wore a long black dress with several pieces of silver jewelry, and in

>one hand she held a long silver staff that resembled a key, with a
decoration on top shaped like a heart with a magenta gem set into it. Immora

>suddenly felt a chill go down her spine, and a strange prickling
sensation on the back of her neck. She had a feeling she should know

>this woman, but she wasn't sure where from.
>Akeru, however, looked at the green haired woman, almost in horror.
"You!"
she gasped.
>
The woman narrowed her eyes. "Yes?"
>
"Akeru, who is that?" Immora asked in a slightly choked voice.
Her
>magical senses were flaring out of control and she couldn't prevent

herself from drawing in magical energy.
>
Akeru was frozen in place with shock and didn't answer. "[Is
something
>wrong?]" one of the Elves asked. "[Oh, just ignore that lady over
there.
We don't know why she's here. Says her name is
'Setsuna']."
>
Setsuna... where had she heard that name before? Immora took an

>involuntary step back. What was this strange sensation? It was as if
she
recognized the woman, but she'd never seen her before! "Who
are you?!"
>she demanded, slipping into the Earth tongue in her confusion. "What
do
you want?!"
>
Setsuna answered calmly, "I'm just here to observe. I won't
interfere
with you."

>"The hell you won't!" Akeru shouted.

>Immora turned to her. "Do you know this woman?!"

>Akeru shuddered slightly. "She's the one who brought me here... she

just suddenly appeared and took me away from my home..."

>
Immora narrowed her eyes. "Look, 'Setsuna', I don't exactly feel

>comfortable having you here. If you don't tell us who you are and
why
you're here--"
>
"Yes, you'll use your magic, won't you?" Setsuna cut in. "I told
you
already, I am here to observe. Don't worry about it."

>Immora clenched her fist. "There's more to you than that, isn't
there?
You really expect us to believe that you're only here to
watch things?"
>
"It is my duty as the Guardian of Time."
>
Immora felt like she'd been frozen in place. The Guardian of
Time...
>here??? What would she be doing here? Why had she taken Akeru here?

"What's going on?" she whispered to herself.
>
"[Um, excuse me? Immora? We need to begin fitting you, if you
could come
over here please.]"

>Immora nodded weakly and walked over. She didn't notice the
dressmakers
as they started measuring her, and could only wonder
about the presence
of the Guardian of Time. She'd always been told that she never, EVER
left
her post, except for rare occasions when she went to Earth to
assume her
role as a "Sailor Senshi". But here she was, on Quenhol of all
places,
acting as if she'd lived here all her life and ignoring
Akeru's accusations.
>
Akeru, however, watched Setsuna with narrowed eyes. She was
incredibly
>upset to see this woman here. Immora looked over to her, her eyes
more
than anything warning her to not try to attack the Guardian.
Akeru

>stifled a sigh.
>"[Hmmm... blue or purple?]"
>Immora blinked in surprised. "[What?]"
>"[Blue or purple. Which one would you prefer for your dress?]"
>"[Blue.]" She turned to an assistant. "[You there, get my friend a
translations crystal.]"
>
"[Yes, m'lady, I'll go get one for her.]"
>
The assistant left the room to find the crystal and Immora told Akeru
where she was going to. Akeru just nodded, then her eyes widened in shock.
"Immora-- Setsuna isn't here anymore!"
>
"What?!" Immora whirled around and saw that the woman had indeed
disappeared. "Where could she have gone to?" she murmured. "And without
anyone noticing her?"
>
"[Ma'am, if you don't mind me saying so, your friend might like
a healing
spell, some new clothes, a bath perhaps? You seem to have had a
rough journey.]"
>
"[Excuse me, my friend still needs a translations crystal. I
will not do
anything until the assistant is able to return with it.]"

>"[Alright.]"
>The assistant soon returned and handed the crystal on a thin gold
chain
to Akeru. She put it on and her eyes widened in amazement.
"It feels...
>different..."
>"That's just the sorcery taking effect," Immora commented. "Don't
worry,
it won't take long to work. In fact, I'm speaking in
Quenholtian now.
>Do you understand what I'm saying?"
>Akeru nodded in awe. "This will be a handy thing to have."

>"Excuse me?" one of the dressmakers said. "Excuse me, umm..."

>"Akeru."
>"Yes, Akeru, we were just saying that you might like us to heal
those
bruises, then you'll probably want to wash up and get some
clothes made.
>This _is_ an important ceremony, after all."
>Akeru nodded her agreement. One of the assistants came forward and
cast
the healing spell on her. The bruises faded almost
immediately. "There
>you go, the bath houses are that way. Oh, Miss Immora, you might
want to
consider bathing also."
>
"I will when I feel like it," Immora said coldly. "Stop making
suggestions
>and do your job."
>The dressmakers took a quick measurement of Akeru before telling
them
they could go. Immora sighed and took Akeru's arm in hers.
"It'll take
>awhile for them to finish our clothes. Might as well go down to the
bath
houses."
>
"Um, if you don't mind me asking, but are they, well--"
>
"Public baths? Pretty much. You get used to them after awhile.
Besides,
>it's a nice change from the river behind my house. These baths are

heated."

>
Immora opened the door and Akeru followed her in. There were two giant pools of water inside, a large amount of steam rising off one of them.
Towels were neatly folded on tables and chairs all around the room.

>Several closed doors led to where the showers were. The bath houses
were empty at this time of night. "That one steaming over there would probably come close to burning our skin. The Elves have a much higher
tolerance for temperature than humans and wouldn't notice." She pulled her hair up and pinned it to keep from getting it wet, then she started
slipping out of her dress and stopped when Akeru emitted a slightly choked sound. "Something wrong?" she asked.

>"Sorry... it's just... ummm..." Akeru turned away quickly.

>Immora giggled slightly and set her clothes on a chair. "I think I understand. The first time I came here there was already five people using the baths and I nearly had a heart attack when one of my
Quenhol-born students told me it would be rude to just stand there.

>The Quenholtians are far different from Earth people, remember?
Nudity isn't that big of a deal to them."

>
Immora slipped into the bath and cocked an eyebrow at Akeru, who was adamantly avoiding looking her way. "Akeru, come on," she prodded. "If
you're that nervous, I promise I won't look. You have to get in eventually, you know. After being on the trail, we both got pretty
dirty. Besides, if you want, I can put a spell on the water so that you can't see through it-- quite useless spell in most cases, actually,
but it would make you feel better, wouldn't it?"

>
"Oh alright," she grumbled. Immora turned away and spoke the spell as waited for her to finish undressing. She felt the water ripple as
Akeru slid in. "There, I'm in. Happy?"

>
Immora laughed slightly. "You're rather touchy about this. It's not that bad, is it?"

>"It's embarrassing," she murmured. "And it makes me really nervous."

>Immora chuckled and pointed a finger at herself. "It's just me,
Akeru! It's not like it's someone you don't even know..." She moved over near Akeru and whispered teasingly, "We'll probably end up seeing
each other without clothes one day anyways, so you should just get used to it."

>"Immora!" Akeru gasped in shock, staring at her with wide eyes. "How
can you say something like that?!"

>
She shrugged slightly and looked up at the skylight above them. "When you've been around as long as I have, you tend to be a little blunt
with your words."

>

>Akeru still seemed a bit shocked. "That was _blunt_ alright..."

>"Well, it's true, isn't it?"

>Akeru coughed. "Well, I... ummm..." she turned away to hide her face.

>Immora smiled slightly. "I'm just trying to lighten you up. You seemed
so upset when Setsuna was there. Try to enjoy yourself and loosen up,

>alright?"

>Akeru sighed and leaned back against the side of the pool. "I'll try...
my nerves are still strung pretty tight though... I was really scared

>when I first saw her there. I thought she'd take me away again. I really
don't want to leave Quenhol, especially since this is where you live."

>
"I'd go with you, you know, so it's nothing to worry about."

>
Akeru smiled slightly. "I know... Immora?" Her smile turned to a frown.

>"Doesn't it bother you at all... knowing that you'll outlive me by
far? I'll be dead sooner than you realize."

>
Immora froze in place and her heart felt like it slowed. She'd never

>considered that... Akeru was mortal, and here she was, over a thousand
already... "Oh my God... I never thought..." She buried her face against

>her knees. She'd live so much longer than Akeru... she'd have to live
on knowing that Akeru was dead... "I don't think I'd be able to live

>with myself if you died," she whispered. "Maybe... there's some way..."

>"That I can live longer? I hope so. I want to spend my life with you...
and if you feel the same, well... since your life is going to be pretty

>long, I'm going to _have_ to extend mine somehow..."

>Immora nodded slowly. "I could ask someone... to..." She bit her lip
hard as she considered her words. "I... Akeru, it's not that I don't

>want to be with you... but I don't know if you really should do this...
I mean, I love you, and I want to spend my life with you, but being

>immortal, having a longer life... it's awful. I hate it. I don't think
you'd want to have the same kind of immortality that I have."

>
"Maybe there's a way to arrange it so I live as long as I feel like

>living?"

>"I think so..." Immora sighed softly. "I wish _I_ could choose... I've
nearly been killed three times, and only because of that spell I

>survived. But I still had to feel all the pain... until I could heal
myself..." She shuddered and wiped a tear from her eye. "I would hate

>to see you live with that kind of suffering. If you ever, _ever_ get
hurt like that, don't make yourself suffer unless there's someone there

>to heal you, because believe me, you WILL feel the pain for as long as
the wound remains, and it'll stay for a long, long time if you can't

>get healing..."

>Akeru slid over beside her and (almost shyly) slipped her arms around Immora. Immora blushed very faintly, but returned the gesture and hugged her. "Immora, I can endure it, I will endure it willingly, because it'll mean that I can stay with you."

>
"Are you sure?"

>
She gently kissed her forehead and whispered softly, "Of course, my love.

>You're worth it, whether you believe you are or not."

>"I'm not," she faintly returned as tears streamed down her cheeks. "I
most certainly am not."

>

>
The dressmakers smiled at them warmly as they came back into the room.

>"We've finished your garments, would you like to get them on now?"

>"Yes, bring them in," Immora told her. The dressmaker handed Akeru her
clothes and then Akeru left the room to change, then the woman handed

>Immora a dress and she slipped it on, then nodded her approval to the
dressmakers. "Good job, thank you." She looked over her dress. It was

>midnight blue in color, with thin straps for sleeves, and it fell to
her knees with a long slit up the right side. The straps were lined in

>silver, along with the trim of her low-cut top, and the hem and slit of
her skirt.

>
"If you'd like, we also found accessories that would match nicely," the

>other dressmaker said, handing them to her.

>Immora slipped on the long white gloves and fastened on the snowy white
cape with the inside lined deep red. She put the silver hoops in her ears,

>then sat down at the vanity to brush her hair and to put on her makeup.
Akeru soon came back wearing a rich red shirt that buttoned up the front

>with a v-neckline. The collar, sleeves, and hem were trimmed thinly in
black. With it she wore loose white pants with a black line going down

>the side of each leg, a shiny brown boots. She wore a faint brownish red
lipstick and had combed her black hair so it was soft and shiny. Immora

>looked over to her and smiled broadly. "You look simply amazing," she
breathed.

>
Akeru grinned. "Why thank you, m'love. So do you." She took Immora's

>hand and helped her up from her seat.

>One of the guards came in and told them that as soon as they were
ready, the ceremony would begin. Immora told him they were ready, then

>told Akeru to go with him and find a seat since she'd have to be in the
procession.

>
As soon stood in line with the other people who'd be walking in, she

>felt terribly nervous. This was a very important ceremony that they
were having her participate in. She wasn't sure if she was ready to

>do this. Several dozen other sorcerers, sorceresses, and mages were
standing there, not actually a part of the ceremony, but as

>representatives of their respective groups. Dozens of humans, Pure

Elves, Forest Elves, Katrisa, and Dragana stood with them, also
as
>representatives. Immora looked over to them. She didn't have much

contact with the Katrisa and Dragana. The Katrisa were a group of

>people that could take the appearance of a cat, human, or a form

in-between, which was what they usually went about as. In that
form,
>their eyes had slit pupils like a cat's, their ears cat's ears on
top
of their head, their hair and skin colored in a way that a
cat's fur
>would be, and a tail curled around in back of them. Their nails were

long, sharp claws, and their teeth were also particularly sharp.
The
>Dragana were a very unusual group, having the appearance of being

something between Elf and Dragon. They all had brown hair with
black
>bangs, red eyes, green skin that was both pale and bright, and wings

sprouting from their back like dragons have, with two talons
pointing
>from each. Their ears were similar to the Pure Elves' in their

appearance, and they were all known for being tall, lanky, with

>vicious fangs and claws. Both races were seldom seen by the
others,
so it was an unusual sight to see them here.
>
Immora sighed and took a deep breath. She had to get this over
with...
>it wouldn't be THAT difficult... walk down the aisle, stand still
for a
bit, then cast the spell and leave... God, there were so
many people
>here! She took a deep breath, then looked around again and saw
Akeru
sitting in the rows of seats. Akeru waved to her and winked.
Immora
>smiled back, suddenly feeling not so nervous. She then glanced
around
and saw that Setsuna had returned; she was sitting in a row
not that
>far from Akeru. Akeru hadn't noticed her yet, from what Immora could
tell.
Immora frowned to herself. Why was Setsuna here, what was
she here to
>observe?

>When the orchestra started up, the groups of people started
marching
down the aisle towards the throne, where Sharra sat
waiting. When they
>reached it, they bowed, and turned to walk to their seats. Immora
was
the only one who was supposed to stay, and she did so. A man
started
>reading aloud from a book some things that had to do with the
ceremony.
Immora let her mind wander as she waited for her time to
come.
>
Eventually, the man stopped speaking and looked to her and said
her cue.
>Immora nodded, then walked over to the young, soon-to-be queen.
Sharra
raised her ice blue eyes to her, her shoulder length purple
hair falling
>away from her face. Sharra lowered her head slightly in a gesture of

respect, and Immora did the same. The mage placed her fingertips
to
>Sharra's temples and slowly said the words of the spell.

>The crowd fell completely silent and Immora shut her eyes tightly as

the
flow of sorcery rushed through her, spreading to her fingertips and sending

>the spell into Sharra. It felt like her blood was on fire; the sensation
of the sorcery flowing through her was almost painful, unlike the pleasant,

>comforting sensation that magic usually gave her. She gritted her teeth,
hoping the spell would take effect quickly.

>
Sharra soon sat back, indicating the spell was done. Immora stumbled

>backward as the crowd starting cheering wildly, and Sharra placed the string
of pearls that would mark her as queen onto her forehead. They were too

>busy cheering and congratulating to notice Immora as she fled the throne,
running towards the back of the large hall. Akeru got up from her seat and

>ran after her, crying out her name.

>Immora stumbled to a stop, leaning against a wall as she breathed hard,
almost sobbing as she tried drawing in magical energy to get the sensation

>of the sorcery out of her system. Where was some that she could draw in?
She clenched her head in her hands as she squeezed her eyes shut and fought

>a scream of pain. She was surprised when two hands grabbed hers in theirs.
Opening her eyes, she saw Akeru standing there, trying to calm her down.

>She was speaking to her, but Immora couldn't hear what she said. A warm
flow of energy, starting in her hands, started to spread through her. She

>closed her eyes and sighed in relief, then collapsed in Akeru's arms.

>"Are you alright?" she heard Akeru say.

>"I'm alright now," she whispered. "The sorcery... those types of energies
are given to the Elves, not to Humans. I didn't realize that using sorcery

>would be so painful. The two energies aren't very compatible. I don't know
how, but when you touched my hands, I was able to flush out the sorcery with

>magical energy."

>Akeru wrapped her arms tightly around her, pulling her close. "I don't know
either, but I'm glad you're alright."

>
Immora breathed deeply to calm her nerves, letting her magical senses dart

>around to keep herself calm, then pulled away from Akeru with a gasp of
shock. Was that energy she sensed-- it couldn't be, could it?

>
"What is it?" Akeru asked, fighting to be heard over the crowd growing

>louder.

>Immora took a step away from Akeru, trying to get her senses correctly in
line and confirm what she'd sensed. "I thought I sensed... an energy coming

>from you..."

>"Huh? What do you mean?"

>Immora narrowed her eyes as the nature of the energy became clear to her.
She opened her mouth to speak, when suddenly a loud, piercing scream

>covered up the crowd. Immora and Akeru whirled around to see the crowd
pushing each other, trying to get out of the way. Looking to the throne,

>they gasped in shock to see E'melok there, standing over Sharra, who

was
on her knees, clutching her arm. Her arm was bleeding, and she was screaming
>wildly, shouting for help. Immora's students were running over, trying to
find the right spells to use to protect the queen.

>
"Damnit!" Immora cried as she shoved her way through the crowd. This

>couldn't be happening, not now! These students were not experienced in
battle, they would only make things worse. She shouted at them to stay back.

>The crowd of gatherers was trying to part to let her through, but they
weren't getting far. Immora looked around and was horrified to see the whole

>of the Assassins' Guild surrounding them, each holding wicked weapons in
their hands, not afraid to use them, as Immora could see by some people

>crying and trying to stay away.

>E'melok grinned and shouted, "Everyone shut up right now!" Everyone
immediately hushed, with the exceptions of some whimpers and cries from

>young children. "Alright, as you may have noticed, our guild is here, and
we're here to kill you, Sharra! I want everyone to stay back, and stay very,

>very still. We won't hesitate to injure or kill anyone who tries to
interfere, is that clear?"

>
Immora swore under her breath as E'melok came towards the crying Sharra with

>a sword raised high. "I'll teach you to try to tell us what to do," she
said through tightly clenched teeth.

>
She was about to lower the sword, when a clear voice rang out in the Earth

>tongue, "Pluto Planet Power... Make up!" followed by a whispered phrase,
"Dead Scream!"

>
A large ball of purple energy and wind slammed into E'melok, who cried out

>in pain. There was a flash of light followed by darkness, and when it was
gone, E'melok lay on the ground, groaning, with Setsuna standing over her,

>dressed in an unusual outfit and holding her staff in hand. Her outfit
looked like a ballerina's uniform crossed with a sailor's garb. She wore

>with it tall gloves and boots, a choker, and a tiara on her forehead. She
raised her staff and shouted, "I am Sailor Pluto, the Guardian of Time! The

>next attempt at violence will be met with equal, if not, greater force!"

>E'melok groaned as she raised her eyes up, and the Assassins' Guild seemed
to draw back slightly, before someone dove forward and grabbed Sharra,

>pressing a knife to her throat before Pluto could react. Sharra groaned
as his fingers closed tightly around her arm, slit all the way down her

>forearm. "Nobody moves!" He shouted. "Nobody try anything or she gets it!"

>Immora tried to think up a spell to stop him, but her mind was a blank, the
words of magic hidden under her jumble of confusion. She still hadn't

>recovered from her use of sorcery. What could they do? Sharra would be dead
before anyone could--

>
A horribly loud sound cut the stillness, and suddenly, to their

surprise,

>the assassin now lay on the ground, dead, his head bleeding from a wound
now in his skull. People quickly ran to Sharra to protect her, while

>everyone else looked around to see what had happened. Immora was shocked to
see Akeru standing there, a gun held in her slightly shaking hands, as she

>looked down in shock and confusion at the man she'd just killed. An Elf
was able to send a spell simultaneously to all the assassins to knock them

>unconscious, as Immora ran towards Akeru.
>

Akeru put the gun away and dropped to her knees, shaking as she looked at
the man's body in horror. Immora was soon at her side, and she tried to pull

>Akeru towards her to embrace and comfort her, but Akeru gently pushed her away. "Please... just... don't touch me right now..." she whispered. She

>slowly stood up, then turned to Immora. Her eyes looked almost haunted. "I
just... I..."

>
Ignoring what she'd said, Immora tightly hugged her, stroking her hair back

>and murmuring, "It's alright, it's alright," to her. Akeru shuddered as
she closed her eyes and rested her head on Immora's shoulder.

"Akeru, you

>did what had to be done. You saved a life in the process. What you did
wasn't wrong. You did it to protect someone else."

>
"Immora," she whispered, "it isn't that... I can handle that I killed him,

>but..." she shook slightly. "Immora, I didn't pull the trigger at all! I
just lifted it and concentrated on wanting him dead and... and suddenly the

>bullet shot out and struck him! I didn't have to pull it... How did that
happen?! How could it?!"

>
"Akeru... please... let's just go somewhere else... I'll tell you, but not

>here, not now."
>

Akeru trembled slightly as she nodded. Immora took her hand in hers and led
her out of the room as the other people also left.

Assistants and workers

>were already starting to clean up, healers were attending to the wounded,
and the assassins were being carried away to the prison. Pluto had

>disappeared shortly after Akeru had killed the assassin.
>

>Immora led Akeru to the gardens in the palace. As she expected, there were
actually some people there this late at night, couples mainly, but they

>were far enough away that they wouldn't hear what they were talking about or
even notice they were there.

>
Immora stepped away from Akeru, hugging her arms around herself as she

>considered what to say. "Akeru... in the past few months, I've felt a
magical energy emanating from you. I was never sure what it was, until

>today. When you came over to me after the ceremony and touched my hands, I
suddenly realized what the energy was. I suppose that at that moment, the

>energy finally developed into what it was meant to be..." Immora trailed
off into silence for the time being.

>
"Immora," Akeru asked softly. "Could you please... tell me what it became?"

>
Immora looked down at the ground. She could see her reflection in a puddle

>of water left from the last rain shower. Her blond hair fell around her pale
face, her cat's pupils focused dully on her reflection. She hated her eyes.

>They made her look like some type of demon. She was already treated as if
she was some sort of weirdo, but these made it worse. She started shaking

>slightly. Why did they have to put that stupid immortality spell on her?
Or that insanity spell? A few dozen years ago, it had activated, and she

>ended up destroying a village, killing many. How could put Akeru at risk
like this? If the spell became active again in her presence, Akeru could

>be hurt. A tear slid down Immora's cheek.

>"Immora? Is something wrong?" Akeru came up behind her, wrapping her arms
around her waist and pulling her up against her. She kissed her shoulder

>gently and whispered in her ear. "If you don't want to tell me, I understand. It's alright."

>
"It has nothing to do with that," she murmured. "I'm sorry, I was just

>thinking... nevermind... I'll tell you... about the energies."

>She sat down on a small hill of grass, patting the ground next to her to
indicate that she wanted Akeru to sit by her. "Akeru, the energies you

>possess are magical, but in a different sense than someone like mine's.
Most mages, and even sorcerers and sorceresses, have powers that mainly

>deal with... well, bringing things into being. We create weather,
teleportation devices, blasts of energy, etc. We control the things we

>create, and we can destroy them as we choose. Our studies are focused on
harnessing power to create the things we need. Most of us don't bother with

>what is already provided for us. If you need a garment, a weapon, food, or
anything else, create it for yourself! Even when manipulating things, we

>usually create the object to manipulate. Our energies go to these things,
and only occasionally will we bother with the already existing, or with

>things like communication. It's not that we can't do anything else, but
the nature of our powers doesn't leave us much choice. There aren't many

>spells that involve the existing.

>"Your energies, your abilities, from what I've seen, are quite different.
Your skills lie solely in what is already present. Yours are in controlling

>and communicating, not creation. But your powers aren't in everything. What
happened with the gun..." Immora paused for a moment to consider her words.

>"Akeru... many of your abilities deal in the mechanical, or the
technologically developed. Guns, computers, vehicles, doors, things like

>that, are yours to command. You can make them act, make them do whatever you
choose, as long as they are capable of it. And you only need to want for it

>to happen. But you also have abilities in the elements-- things like air,
fire, stone, water, weather... Right now, you can only communicate with them,

>sense them, maybe even control them to some small extent. But that is all,
as far as elements go. You have potential for much greater though. There is

>an object that mages have developed, called an amplifier ring, for lack of
better term. Several dozen exist right now, more are being made. Each one

>is designed to be attuned with a specific element or object. By wearing them,
the user can increase their abilities in that thing to whatever they have

>the potential to achieve. If you were to wear them, you would also be able
to control the elements, bend them to your will, make them appear where you choose. If you need a fire, some will be taken from somewhere else and
given to you. If you want a drink, the glaciers will provide pure water for you. If you wanted to attack someone with lightning, the storm clouds would
give up their electricity for you. You could bend them to your will and make them do whatever you choose.

>"You have a great amount of power, Akeru, and a great responsibility to go
along with it. I don't know if you want that, but now you have it."

>
Akeru thought about it for a bit, then responded softly, "I think I can handle it, if you help me. If these things are magical in nature, you could
teach me about them."

>
Immora shook her head. "I would, but your powers are so different from the spells we mages cast. To cast a spell, we draw in energy from an outside
source and channel it through us, and make the spell happen by releasing the energy with the specific words that will make it do what we need it to do.
Your abilities, however, deal with the energy already in something. You don't need to draw the energy in, you just make the energy already in the
object do what you want. I don't know how to do that, so I couldn't teach you... I'm sorry. If I were an archmage, it would be possible. An archmage
doesn't use the words of a spell to make something happen. They have developed their abilities to the point that they can merely will it to
happen and the energy will follow what they choose it to do. I still need to use the words though."

>Akeru sighed. "I guess if I experiment, I could make these powers work out
right. But make sure you are there with me, alright? I don't understand magic that well, and I need you to help me understand what it is I am
doing."

>
"I'll do that," Immora said softly. She looked up into the sky at the moons.

>"Akeru, I know this isn't something I should be asking, but how can you love
me? I'm a horrible person. I've killed many people--willingly--made many people suffer. I'm cold to everyone, except for you. I don't like letting
anyone see inside me. The only way any breaks those boundaries is by using

>a spell against me, with I believe Lorenada inadvertently did to me. I am
hated and feared by so many people. How can you love me, knowing what I've

>done? You're so much better than me. You're kind, caring, loyal, everything
I can't be. You're a wonderful person. I don't deserve someone like you."

>
Akeru looked over at her, then reached over and cupped her chin in her hand.

>"Immora, you might have done some wrong things, but you've also done a lot
of good. You've helped many people, healed many people, and you've been an

>overall good influence to many. I understand that you might feel bad for
all the pain you've caused, but you have to consider, what was your reason

>behind it? You told me it was alright to kill that man because I was saving
someone else in the process--is that why you killed others? You are cold to

>many people, but that isn't wrong or evil. You've been hurt emotionally and
physically, particularly by Necros and Nagera, and I don't know that you can

>ever forget what happened, but it's made you strong. It's better to not let
people know about you than to give them the chance to take advantage of what

>they know. I don't see for the things you say are wrong, I see you for all
the good things you are. You were nice to me, even though you'd never met

>me before. You've been here for me, listened to me, given me someone to
trust. You've always been kind to me. You can make me laugh, and feel happy,

>like no one has been able to do. You are a wonderful person, Immora, that's
why I love you."

>
Immora's eyes shimmered with tears as she whispered, "I don't deserve you..."

>I don't... I can't even respect myself... I love you so much, but I can't
help but doubt myself still. Every time I look at you, I feel happier, and I

>want you to be so happy, but are you sure you can be happy with someone
like me?"

>
"Yes, of course I can! Immora," Akeru grabbed her hands and stared her in

>the eye, "stop being so negative about yourself. I know that it's hard for
you to believe that anyone could love you, but I do, I truly do. Never doubt

>that, because even if you don't believe that I could, I do, and I always
will."

>
Immora lowered her face and started sobbing. "Akeru," she whispered in a

>choked voice, "please... just hold me..." Akeru hugged her tightly, stroking
her hair. "Thank you," Immora whispered. "Thank you, for being here for me."

>
Akeru gently pressed her lips to Immora's forehead. "You're welcome, m'love."

>C'mon, why don't we go inside? You need some rest."

>"Not yet," Immora said softly. She brushed away her tears, standing up.
"Come down to the lake with me, just for a little while."

>
Akeru nodded and followed her. As soon as they arrived, Immora told her to

>stop, then stood by the lake, her back to it as she faced Akeru. "You
wanted immortality, correct? And I was going to put the

protection spell

>on you too... I looked into someone's mind earlier and discovered the ones
I wanted. I want to give those to you, but please be ready... please give

>me a bit of energy when I am done. Sorcery is very painful, and I couldn't
find the magical equivalent. Alright?"

>
"Immora, don't hurt yourself for me."

>
"I'd give anything for you," Immora whispered faintly. "I'd suffer anything,

>give up anything, I'd die... for you..."

>She said the spell softly, and as soon as it was done, she felt the pain
again. Akeru was soon there next to her, grabbing her hands, whispering to

>her as she gave some energy to soothe her. Immora shivered slightly and then
smiled faintly. "Thank you... the pain is gone now..."

>
Akeru nodded and whispered a thank you. She then hugged her tightly. "Now

>we really are together forever, hmm?"

>Immora laughed slightly. "We are, we certainly are."

>Akeru suddenly scooped Immora up in her arms and carried her back towards
the palace. "C'mon, we're going back to our room. You need to rest. You've

>had a very long day. They're having a celebration party for the new queen,
>I heard, but we don't need to bother with that, now do we?"

>
When they got back to their room, Akeru set Immora gently down on the bed,

>then lit the candles, which filled the room with soft, dim light, just
enough to see by. "I'm going to bring you some pajamas, then go change into

>mine, alright?" Immora nodded as Akeru handed her the long silk nightgown
she usually wore. Akeru went into the bathroom to change into her robe.

>Immora sighed softly to herself, brushing her hair quickly before sliding
under the covers again. Akeru soon came out and lay down beside her. "You

>should get some sleep," Akeru told her. "You need your rest."

>"I'm not tired in the sleepy sense though. I'd rather stay awake."

>"Hmm, well, if you want to, go ahead. I'm not sleepy either." They both
smiled slightly. Akeru looked over Immora slightly, then commented softly,

>"You're very beautiful, you know that?"

>Immora blushed faintly. "Thank you, um, you are too."

>Akeru smiled and put her arm around Immora's shoulders. "Hmm, shouldn't we
be considered lovers now? I mean, after all, we are in love, and this is

>kinda a relationship now."

>"I suppose so," Immora said with a slight shrug, then she kissed Akeru's
cheek. "I like the sound of that, actually."

>
Akeru grinned and kissed her lips gently. "Same here." She hugged Immora

>close to her, then gently pressed her lips to her shoulders and her neck.
"Are you certain you aren't at all sleepy?"

>
"Yes..." Immora responded with whisper. She pressed her slightly open mouth

>to Akeru's, who returned the kiss with fond passion. They held the kiss as
they pressed closer to each other, wrapping their arms

around each other's

>necks. She gently trailed kisses down Akeru's neck as Akeru ran her fingers
through her hair. Akeru tipped her face up to kiss her lips again, then

>kissed her shoulders while she slid the straps of Immora's nightgown down.
With a whispered word, Immora made most of the candles go out as she bent

>to kiss her love again. "I love you," she murmured to Akeru.

>"And I love you," Akeru responded softly as Immora untied her robe before
they kissed again.

>
Setsuna, standing at her Time Gate, smiled to herself as she turned away

>respectfully from the images on the mirror she had been watching.

>Time: In a memory, the next morning
Place: In a memory, the royal palace in Immonu, Quenhol

>

>
Loud pounding on their door woke Immora and Akeru from their sleep. Immora

>groaned as she opened her eyes. Bright sunlight was streaming in the window,
piercing her eyes. She looked over briefly to Akeru, trying to hide her eyes

>from the sun too. She flung the rumpled covers off of her, almost tripping
as she stepped on her nightgown. She yawned and searched through the closet

>for some clothes. The pounding on the door continued. "Who is it?!"

>"Ka'ina, hurry up!"

>"I'll get it," Akeru said. She stared hard at the door, concentrating, and
not long afterwards, it swung open, almost hitting the astonished Ka'ina,

>who walked in. Akeru shut the door with her powers as Ka'ina stared at it.

>"Good job, Akeru! Ka'ina, I'll be out in a bit, I need to get some clothes
on."

>
"What do you mean, get some clothes on?"

>
"Nevermind." Immora continued to look through the clothes, pausing to note

>the tangles in her long hair. "Oh man, these will take so long to comb out!"

>Ka'ina was observing her surroundings, looking around the large room, which
actually branched into a few parts; the entrance hall, the bathroom, and the

>bedroom, the closet Immora was in being in the bathroom. "Akeru, aren't
you going to get dressed?" she called.

>
Akeru groaned. "I'm still sleepy! Let me sleep!"

>
"Who's that?" Ka'ina called from the entrance hall. "Where are you,

>anyways?"

>"In the closet in the bathroom that adjoins the bedroom. There's some chairs
in there, go ahead and sit down to wait, if you want."

>
Ka'ina walked in and stared in visible shock at Akeru. "What the--"

>
Akeru smiled sheepishly and pulled the covers up higher. "Um, hi, just

>ignore me for now... say, aren't you that student of Immora's, about the
same age as her, right?"

>
"Yes, I am," Ka'ina said in an ice cold voice.
>
"Oh, well, nice to meet you. Immora's mentioned you before."

>
"I'm sure."
>
Akeru frowned a bit. "Is something wrong?"
>
"Nothing at all," Ka'ina said in a voice that indicated she was hiding
something.

>"Oh... well... say, where'd my robe go? Immora, where'd you put my robe?!"

>"It's somewhere on the floor, I guess!"

>Ka'ina picked it up and handed it to Akeru. "Thanks," Akeru said,
slipping
it back on.
>
Immora came back in, brushing her hair vigorously. "Hi, Ka'ina,
it's been
awhile since I've seen you. What are you here for?"

>"I was here for the coronation, and I saw you at it, but I didn't see you at
the celebration afterwards and was wondering if everything was alright."
>
"Oh, I'm just fine, you?" Immora grimaced as the brush got stuck in a
tangle. Akeru took it from her and started brushing it for her.

>"I'm alright, I suppose," Ka'ina said, turning to look at a painting hanging
on the wall. "Everyone is wondering when you will come back. We haven't
heard from you in months."

>"Oh, well, Akeru--this is Akeru, by the way--showed up, and she needed
someone to help her get around Quenhol, so she's been staying with me, and
it just never occurred to me to check up on everyone. Sorry 'bout that."

>Ka'ina narrowed her eyes. "You're unusually cheerful. Has anything else
happened since I last saw you?"
>
Immora smiled sheepishly. "Well, yes." She took the brush from Akeru, and
simply said the words of a spell that would undo the tangles. "Akeru and
I... that is... we..." She hit herself on the forehead. "Crap, how do I
explain this?"

>Akeru grinned slightly. "I have an idea." She whisked Immora into her arms,
dipped her low, kissed her passionately, then raised the flustered mage back
to her feet. "Catch the drift?" she asked Ka'ina.

>"Quite," Ka'ina said between clenched teeth. "I supposed this explains why
I came in to find nightclothes strewn on the floor and you lying naked in
the bed."

>Immora and Akeru both blushed brightly. "Ehehehe... yeahhhh... ummm... hey,
I'm kinda hungry, let's get some breakfast, okay?" Immora shoved Akeru in
>
the general direction of the closet. "Put something else on, alright?"
>
"If I'm not mistaken, I'd say Ka'ina's jealous," Akeru muttered to herself.
>
"How have you been?" Immora asked Ka'ina. "It's been awhile since we've
talked. I need to catch up."

>"Not much has happened," Ka'ina said quietly. "Things are calm. Everyone's
been studying, but that's about it."

>
"Oh, that's nice," Immora said, looking up towards the ceiling.
Had Ka'ina
>changed at all over these past several months? Hmm.. no, she still had that
>jealous streak, and she still seemed to be--

>
"Ready!" Akeru came out and grinned. She grabbed her translation crystal
>and put it around her neck. "Let's get something to eat, shall we?"

>Immora smiled to her and took her hand as they walked to the dining hall.
Ka'ina trailed behind them, sulking. She was about to comment on something
>when a kid bumped into her. "Ooof! Hey, what was tha-- oh, sorry about that,
are you alright?" She helped the kid up, while Immora and Akeru turned to see what happened.

>The small Elf boy with green colored skin nodded. "What's yer name?" he
asked, looking up at her with wide eyes.
>
"My name is Ka'ina. What's yours?"
>
" 'Kah-ee-nuh'? My name is Radagee."
>
Ka'ina frowned. "Well, run along, Radagee."
>
Immora also frowned. "Odd name for a child. I wonder why his parents would
>choose a name like that?"

>"What's it mean?" Akeru asked.

>"It means 'magic dragon'. That's an odd name for an Elf. 'Dagee' is usually
only given to those with Dragana background."

>
Ka'ina's eyes widened slightly. "You don't think he could be the child of a Dragana, do you?!"

>Immora laughed. "Of course not! Everyone knows that Dragana only give birth
to females!"
>
"Waitaminute," Akeru broke in. "If they only have girls, how can they continue to reproduce?"

>Immora blinked in surprise. "It's rather unusual, actually. What happens in
most cases is that a male dragon will form a magical bond with a female,
>usually Elf, and if the bond is kept long enough, she will actually become
pregnant. Know one knows why, but it happens. The child will be born as a Dragana. However, some Dragana will take on lovers that are Elfin or Human,
and if they have a child, it's usually going to have very few dragonish traits. I know of one Dragana that actually had a dragon and a Dragana as
parents. She's almost entirely dragon. Quite nice though. I'll introduce you to her sometime."

>"So, what you're saying is that when the woman becomes pregnant, it's almost
guaranteed to be female?"
>
"Well, yes, it will always be, unless the father is Human or Elf, then it's possible to have a boy."

>"That's odd," Akeru commented. "It must be really unusual to be a Dragana."

>Immora shrugged. "They're an unusual group of people."

>They entered the dining hall and found a table to sit at. A plump Human
woman soon came over. "Hello, hello! I hope you are all doing alright.

>Here's the menu, just holler when you're ready!"

>"Excuse me," Immora asked, "but do you know how to make 'scrambled eggs'?"

>"Well, if you tell us how to make it, we sure can! In fact we--
gasp Say!
You're Immora, aren't you?"
>
Immora nodded to her. "Yes, I am."
>
The woman grabbed her hand and started shaking it hard. "Ma'am, my son,
>Kulju, is a member of your school, and he's been telling me about how great
it is! It's an honor to meet you!"
>
Immora practically fell out of her seat from the energy of the handshake.
>"Thank you, I, ow, that hurts, um, Kulju is a very bright pupil, actually,
the last time I was there he was doing quite well."
>
"Excuse me," Ka'ina cut in, "I study with your son quite often. He's
>expressed a wish to learn more about the healing arts, I don't know if he
mentioned it to you. He's been telling me he misses his family alot."
>
"Aw, my Kulju's always been a sweet boy," the woman grinned. She nudged
>Ka'ina in the ribs. "Isn't he a handsome fellow?"

>"I... suppose."

>The lady chuckled. "Aw, you're just shy aren't you-- now what do we have
here? A girl with the eyes of an Elf! What's your name, Elf-eyes?"
>
Akeru blushed slightly. "My name is Akeru, um, it basically means sunrise
>or dawn."

>"Hmmm... I saw you at the coronation, aren't you the one that used that
strange contraption to kill the assassin threatening Sharra?"
>
Akeru paled and nodded.
>
"I must say, I admired you when I saw that. You saved a good life, someone
>who means alot to many people."

>"Um, thank you, I guess."

>The woman laughed loud. "Well, anyways, what's with those eyes, hmm? Look
like an Elf's, and the translation crystal... you aren't from Quenhol, are
>you? Earth, I'll bet."

>"That's right! How'd you guess?"

>Immora smiled to her and said, "Pretty much anyone who has some unexplained
attribute or feature is from Earth."
>
The lady nodded. "Yup, it sure holds true. I'd like to go there someday, but
>I know nothing about Earth culture! Ah well. So, Akeru, what brings you to
the palace?"
>
"I just came with Immora, that's all."
>
"Ah, tagging along I see." The lady grinned, then turned serious and looked
>at Immora. "You know, deary, you've been around quite awhile, you ever gonna
hook up with someone? A lady needs someone there for her, you know."
>
Immora giggled slightly. "Akeru's my lover, actually."
>
The woman looked at her in surprise. "Goodness gracious, I can't believe it!
>The great Immora finally found someone! We've always heard tales

about how
'cold' and 'unfeeling' you were, but boy, you sure proved them wrong! Well,>congratulations, girls! Now, what does everybody want for breakfast?"
>After giving their orders, Ka'ina questioned Immora, "How could you tell
that woman so much about you? You don't even know her!"

>
"I've decided to try being nice to people for a change, what's wrong with>that?"
>"She was a complete stranger!"
>Immora glared at her. "Everyone is, the first time you meet them."
>Ka'ina gritted her teeth. "You've changed, Immora, for the worse. I don't
know you anymore." She stood up abruptly. "Excuse me, I'm going to go>outside a moment."
>After Ka'ina stormed out, Akeru turned to Immora, who was holding her head
in her hands. "What's wrong with her? And why did she seem so... jealous of>me earlier?"
>Immora sighed. "When Necros brought me here, Ka'ina went to the school
already, not by choice. He had done magical experiments with her, which gave>any spells she cast with positive intentions the result of placing the
person under her influence, and he also changed her eyes to look like that.>Ka'ina was my first friend at the school, and I've known her since then.
We've been good friends since then but..." Immora sighed again and looked>away. "Somewhere, in the last few hundred years, she fell in love with me.
She tried to convince me to be with her, but I refused. One of the reasons>I avoid the school now is that she would try to pressure me."
>"That explains the jealousy... I have with you what she couldn't have."
>Immora nodded. "Don't take it personally if she is rude to you. She's a
very determined person, and she is really quick to anger. Just ignore it if>she says anything offensive, alright?"
>"I will, don't worry."
>Ka'ina came back not long after that. She refused to look at Akeru and
remarked snidely, "I hope you two enjoy flaunting your relationship.">
"We aren't trying to," Immora said, "but there's no reason to deny it.">
Ka'ina slammed her fist on the table and raised her multihued eyes to Akeru.>"Tell me," she asked sarcastically, "how does it feel, Akeru, to know that
you are apparently more worthy than me, hmm? Don't you just feel proud to>know that you succeeded where I failed?"
>Akeru narrowed her eyes and said softly, "This isn't a matter of worth or
pride. It's a matter of feelings, maybe even destiny. Maybe Immora just>isn't meant to be with you. You'll find someone someday."
>"She's MINE!" Ka'ina shouted. "If I can't have her, NOBODY can!"

>"I am not some object you can claim!" Immora snapped. "If you trully cared,
you would realize that!"
>
"I don't have to take this crap!" Ka'ina said. "I finally find you again and
>you've cast aside our friendship for someone that you've only know a few
months!"
>
"I am not casting it aside! I will still be your friend, but you can't just
>sit here and accuse Akeru like that. She hasn't done anything to you, how
could she, she just met you today?"
>
"She stole you from--"
>
Immora screamed at her, "Why don't you just accept that I don't share your
>feelings?! Stop trying to claim me!" Her voice had raised to a shriek, her
eyes were glowing white. "LEAVE ME ALONE!"

>
Shivering, she felt herself losing control as the world went white. She
>couldn't see or feel anything, but she could hear voices... what was going
on? Suddenly, it went black as she passed out...
>

>
Immora woke up with a start as a splash of cold water washed over her
>face. She sat up in the bed she lay in, gasping and coughing, peering
around to see where she was. Her vision was blurred and she could barely
>make out a thing; it was almost as if... before, before she was taken by
Necros, she could remember being nearsighted, needing visual aids to see
>clear; after being exposed to magic she could see perfectly clear though...

>Her arms and legs were marked with bruises, and they, along with her torso,
were stinging with cuts and scrapes. Her body felt as if it had been in
>a battle, but her magic would have healed these wounds, surely it would
have automatically, these weren't terribly difficult things to cure...
>A white bathrobe was tied around her, she assumed that the clothes she'd
worn earlier must have been too bloodied or stuck to her cuts... what was
>going on?

>She shivered and trembled, wincing from the pain as she tried to make out
her surroundings. Why couldn't she see right? As long as the magic was
>there--

>Her eyes widened in shock. Her magic... she couldn't feel it... what
was going on?! She almost screamed in horror, but then she could hear
>Akeru's soothing voice speaking, "It's alright, love, I'm here, it's
going to be okay..."
>
"I can't see clear... things are blurred..." Immora whispered as Akeru
>hugged her. "Wh-what happened? I remember... arguing with Ka'ina, then
everything went white and silent, and I was numb and I could hear things
>but didn't know what was being said... then it went black...

>Akeru tensed up and sighed. "Immora, I don't think I really can explain
what happened... you'd have to have seen it, been there..."

>
Immora lowered her head as she gently pushed Akeru away from her. "The
>insanity spell, that was it, wasn't it? This is what usually happens...
I'll get angry and suddenly I don't know what's going on and I wake up
>not remembering... but this time is different... I can't feel the magic
in me, and things that should be affected because of my magic--my sight,
>my wounds--aren't. Please, love, try to tell me what happened..."

>"I could let you see," Akeru whispered softly. "You know, in my mind, what
happened... you don't have your magic now, but you should soon. Just
>relax and wait for it to come back, then you can see what happened."

>Immora nodded, but still twisted her mouth in a quizzical expression. She
felt tired without her magic, the energetic feeling it gave was almost
>addictive; without it, she craved it, and with it, it was wonderful, but
she always felt like she needed more... She hated that feeling, the feeling
>she knew all mages experienced, that they had to continue, no matter what,
in their studies, because they had to satisfy this urge to gain more power,
>and with it, greater abilities and even more magical energy flowing in
them. She was feeling strangely aware of how physically weak she really was
>without the power, and she felt the weight of the thousand years of
accumulated experiences she had.
>
Reaching a trembling hand towards Akeru, she choked out, "I'm scared, I'm
>so scared... I feel so weak..."

>Akeru clasped her hand tightly. "Hush, just relax, it'll go away soon."

>Immora sighed softly and glanced to her right, noticing what appeared to be
a hand mirror there. Squinting to attempt to focus on it, she reached out
>and grabbed it, holding it in front of her where it wasn't blurred in her
vision. She was so much paler than before, probably a result of her
>injuries, her eyes looked so haunted and lifeless, the sparkle that usually
shone in them was gone, leaving her eyes dull. The slits of pupils she had
>didn't usually seem so unusual or frightening, after all, they were
symbolic of her mage status, something to be proud of more than anything,
>but now... she looked horrendous, like some sort of demon. She threw the
mirror aside, breaking the glass, and clutched the blankets tight. She
>fought back a sob, a shudder racking her thin frame as she tried to relax.
Her mind felt almost clear, with the magic gone, the fog around her
>memories was dissipating, but what would she find--

>She gasped in shock as her vision went into sharp, crisp focus, and her
skin shone with bright light as magic rushed inside her. She screamed
>loudly at the rush of adrenaline, the sudden energetic, comforting feeling
that the magic gave. Her wounds healed themselves almost immediately, she
>felt alive again... she smiled broadly as the amount of stored

magical
energy within her filled to the brim, her eyes glowing with life and power.

>
Opening her eyes she saw Akeru watching her with a look of shock and awe.

>The light had gone away now, and she was whole again. She hadn't realized
just how much she'd come to count on her magic, and now...

>
She gasped and her eyes widened as she noticed Akeru had several bruises

>and scrapes. "What h--"

>"Hush, you'll see, just look in my mind. My wounds can wait."

>Immora sighed softly and quietly weaved the spell, her mind joining with
her lover's as she saw the events that she couldn't remember experiencing...

>

>
"LEAVE ME ALONE!"

>
A burst of bright light almost blinded Akeru and Ka'ina as Immora's eyes

>lit up. Ka'ina screamed loudly and turned away, shouting to the other
people in the room to get out immediately, which they did in a hurry. Immora

>hunched over, clutching her arms tightly as she shrieked. Akeru rushed over
to her when the light dimmed, and was shocked when Immora suddenly lashed

>out at her with a tightly clenched fist. Akeru barely managed to avoid
being hit and took a step back, confused by Immora's actions.

>
"What's wrong?! What's going on?!" she asked frantically.

Something wasn't

>right, she could feel it.

>"Get away from her! It's too dangerous!" Ka'ina shouted.

>Akeru ignored her and moved towards Immora again. "Immora, what are y--"

>Immora aimed a fierce kick right into her stomach, winding her for a bit.
Akeru gasped in shock as a sword whizzed by her face, narrowly avoiding

>hitting her, and she was thrown back against the wall when she sidestepped
it. The blade embedded itself in the wall, and Akeru looked with wide eyes

>to see a snarling Immora holding the sword in her hand. She brought her
knee up swiftly, catching Akeru in the stomach. Akeru lurched forward and

>fell to the ground, looking up with wide eyes and the mage standing over
her, gathering in magical energy with a determined look on her face. Not

>knowing what else to do, Akeru scrambled away and shouted to Ka'ina,
"What the hell's going on?! She's trying to hurt me!"

>
"I-I think it's the insanity spell, it sure does seem like it," Ka'ina said

>as she also began drawing in energy, her eyes flashing first silver, then
blue, finally green, then cycling again, shifting so rapidly it was hard to

>tell what was happening. "She's not going to pay attention to the fact that
we're her friends, she'll just attack at random no matter who we are. If

>you have that gun of yours with you or any abilities I don't know about, use
them!"

>
Akeru looked at her in horror. "I can't shoot _her_--"

>
"Well, she's going to kill us if we don't do something!" Ka'ina snapped,

>shooting a bolt of lightning at Immora, who quickly countered with a burst
of ice. "You have to put aside your feelings so we can stop her! If we don't,
who knows what she'll do!"

>Akeru trembled all over, then closed her eyes and silently said, If you
can hear me, elements, don't let Immora draw energy from you... we can't

>let her use her magic now. Please don't give her energy.

>She felt an odd surge, and she was given a response--not words, really,
more like sensations--and she knew that they had agreed to do as she asked.

>She sighed in relief and opened her eyes to see Ka'ina running to subdue
Immora.

>
Immora stopped midspell when her source of energy was cut off. It looked as

>if she had frozen in place; having a spell cut off in the middle of casting
it could have unusual repercussions. Ka'ina had an odd vial in her hand; it

>wasn't shaped normally, it appeared to curve and twist. It was filled with a
bright purple liquid that glowed slightly. Grabbing Immora's shoulder, she

>attempted to pour it down Immora's throat.

>"I think not," Immora said in a chilled voice. A dagger shot out from her
hand and dug into Ka'ina's shoulder. Ka'ina cried out in pain and doubled

>over, giving Immora the chance to shove her away hard, knocking the vial to
the ground where it shattered. Turning to face Akeru, she sent a rain of

>tiny metal shards at her.

>Barely managing to shield herself, Akeru dove under a table covered in a
cloth and sat breathing hard, her thoughts racing. She's out to kill us,

>she doesn't know friend from foe... if it comes to our life or death though,
what can we do? I can't bring myself to hurt her, even if she isn't in

>control of herself right now... Trembling, Akeru slowly took her gun out.
She looked down at it, fumbling to keep a grip on it as it slipped from her

>sweaty palms. Calm down, focus... you don't have to hit her, just aim above
her to startle her... Akeru peered from under the table and saw Immora had

>started fighting with Ka'ina, both raining blows against each other. Immora
tried attacking her with a dagger, but Ka'ina knocked it from her hands and

>sent the blade skimming across Immora's skin instead. Noting where she was,
Akeru closed her eyes and held the gun out. Just concentrate, she told

>herself, and it will do the rest... The bullet fired without her needing to
pull the trigger, shooting just above Immora's head.

>
As she anticipated, Akeru saw Immora duck down for cover, and look around

>in surprise, distracted long enough for Ka'ina to get away from her. The
look of sheer anger on her face made Akeru's pale as she started crawling

>out from under the table. Immora leapt through the air towards her,

attempting to land on her and knock her over. Akeru rolled to the side,
>sending Immora crashing to the ground. She quickly moved to pin Immora down,
holding her wrists tightly in her hands and digging her knees into the mage's legs to keep her from kicking her. Immora snarled and spat at her,
but Akeru kept her hold on her. "You alright?" she asked Ka'ina.

>
"Oh... I'm just... fine," Ka'ina gasped, another vial in her hand. Rushing over, she grabbed Immora's chin, prying her jaw open, and poured the contents of the liquid down the other's throat. She snapped Immora's jaw shut. The mage writhed and refused to swallow. Ka'ina held a sharp knife to
her throat and hissed, "Swallow it all, you hear me, or this knife cuts deep."

>Immora grimaced and swallowed, then coughed hard. Ka'ina whispered the
words of a spell.

>
"What is that stuff supposed to do?" Akeru asked.

>
"It will temporarily remove her ability to use magic, long enough for us to render her unconscious at least."

>Immora surprised her by suddenly curling her body in such a way that Akeru's
grip was weakened and she was able to pull away. She skittered across the floor, trying to escape, kicking hard at them when they tried to get near
her. Stumbling to her feet, she shouted, "You won't stop me, nothing can stop me, NOTHING!"

>"Distract her," Ka'ina mumbled lightly to Akeru. "I have an idea. Just keep
her busy long enough for me to knock her out."

>
Akeru inclined her head slightly to acknowledge her agreement.

"Oh, is that

>so, Immora? Why do you think that?" She started walking towards her, gun
in hand; she didn't plan on actually using it, but she hoped it would at least keep Immora from trying anything. Ka'ina disappeared.

>"I'm Immora! I'm the most powerful mage in existence! Nothing can stop my
power, I'm practically an archmage now!" Nevertheless, she was backing away

>as Akeru advanced.

>"Mmm hmm, and that means what when that stuff we gave you takes full
effect, not to mention that the elements aren't going to be listening to you

>until I tell them it's alright?"

>"I don't need it to beat the likes of you two! You're pathetic, weak, and
not fit to lick my boots. I could destroy you without a second thought."

>
"That's interesting," Akeru murmured. "What about friends? Do they mean

>anything to you, do you even have any? Can you even remember a thing?!"

>"I..." Immora faltered. "That doesn't matter!"

>"Oh, but it does. What if I told you that having friends, family, love,
things like that, are more important than your power. After all, they will

>always be there, just something as simple as a drink can take away

your
magic. This isn't how you really are, you know. You're under the influence

>of a spell. Why not try to break it? Or are you not powerful enough? I'll
let you draw in the type of energy to do it."

>
Immora snorted. "Hmph! Those things aren't important, and I most certainly

>am not under any influence."

>"Oh really? If you used a spell on someone, would they notice what changes
it did to them? After all, you are so powerful and all. Wouldn't you react

>the same if someone placed a spell on you?"

>"... I suppose... but that's beside the point!"

>Akeru chuckled as Immora backed up into a wall and jumped in surprise.
Immora was letting her guard down, or at least was too confused by what was

>being said to think about attacking. "I think not. The whole point of this
is that you aren't thinking like your usual self, and if you were, you

>wouldn't be doing this."

>"Oh really? Well then, what would my 'usual' self do in this case?" Immora
taunted her. "I probably would have destroyed you on sight, bitch."

>
Akeru couldn't help but flinch at the remark. "No, you would never do

>something like that. In this situation-- well, we wouldn't even be in this
situation."

>
Immora snorted. "Oh sure, I believe you. Then tell me, what kind of

>situation would we be in?"

>Akeru was standing right in front of her now. A strange sort of prickling
formed on the back of her neck, and she heard Ka'ina's voice in her mind.

>"I'm right here, I'm just... a sort of invisible state, but not quite. I
need her more occupied than this. Do something so she won't notice what's

>going on around her, much less me."

>"And what do you propose I do?"

>Ka'ina sounded bitter as she told her, "Right now, I couldn't care less
whether you put on a puppet show or rip her cloak off and tie it around her

>head, I just need her attention completely focused on you, got it?"

>Akeru sighed inwardly and turned her attention back to Immora.

>"Excuse me, I believe you have a question to answer," Immora taunted. "Or
do I have to hurt you again?"

>
Akeru smiled softly. "For one, you'd never hurt me. To answer your question,

>it depends on what mood you're in, as to what the situation would be."

>"Uh huh, I'd never hurt you. Sure. I don't even know you! Tell me then,
if I do know you, what would I do?"

>
Have to distract her, this way will work plenty well, as awkward as it may

>be in this case, Akeru thought to herself. "You'd probably return this
gesture."

>
"What g--"

>
Akeru swiftly moved forward and kissed her fiercely, not shutting her eyes

>so she could make sure Immora was distracted by it. Immora tensed

with
shock and disbelief, staring back at her in confusion, her fingers digging

>into Akeru's shoulders in an attempt to push her back. Akeru was surprised
however, when she closed her eyes and seemed to soften under the embrace and

>kiss back. Before she could worry any more about it, Ka'ina drew away the
invisibility and knocked her unconscious with a tap to the side of her head.

>When Immora collapsed in her arms, Akeru looked at Ka'ina in surprise. "How
did you do that just by hitting her?"

>
"It happens," Ka'ina said coldly.

>
Akeru trembled a bit. Now that Immora had been taken care of,
she could

>think about other things... and she could fully see just how much
hatred and
jealously Ka'ina felt towards her. "We should probably take her to a bed

>or something to rest."
>

"I'm sure you love taking her to a bed whenever you get the chance,"
Ka'ina
snapped, clenching the shoulder where Immora had stabbed her.

>
Akeru lowered her eyelids at Ka'ina. "Why don't we just set aside personal

>differences and concentrate on Immora's well-being right now, ok? If you
want to make rude remarks and bicker with me, save it for when Immora is

>alright. Understood?"
>

Ka'ina snorted. "Fine then."
>

Akeru lifted Immora in her arms and walked out of the dining hall to take
her back to their room. Ka'ina followed at a distance, looking up and down

>the hall for signs of any other people. The halls were deserted, however.
Ka'ina had to open the door for her since her arms were occupied already.

>Shutting the door behind them, Ka'ina followed her into the bedroom, where
Akeru laid Immora down on the bed.

>
"I'm going to get some medicines and things to shut out the insanity,"

>Ka'ina told her. "Make sure she stays asleep and clean her up."
>

Akeru nodded at her, and Ka'ina left the room. Akeru looked down at Immora,
and noted with some horror the amount of gashes and bruises on her. Her

>dress clung to her wounds, and would probably only irritate them.
Akeru went
into the bathroom and brought back a bowl of warm water, a washcloth, some

>ointment, and a white bathrobe. She carefully pulled Immora's dress off,
then started to clean her cuts and rub ointment on them to help them heal

>better. Once finished, she tied the bathrobe around Immora's waist and
pulled the sheets around her. She looks so vulnerable and weak, Akeru

>thought to herself. I hate seeing her hurt like this. I hope Ka'ina gets
back soon to help her.

>
Akeru sighed as she sat waiting. Ka'ina eventually arrived with all sorts

>of vials, herbs, and jars of solutions, along with a few spellbooks.
"I've
never really done this before," Ka'ina murmured, "and I don't want to resort

>to magic to help her. I'll try out all these medicines and things and we'll
see if it worked once she wakes up."

>
Akeru couldn't really follow just what it was Ka'ina was doing. From what
>she could see, Ka'ina was tossing herbs and spices around, making the room
smell unusual, rubbing liquids against Immora's temples, chanting, and some
>other things she didn't understand the meaning of. It wasn't really herb
lore, she could tell that, and definitely not magic. What was it?
>
Whatever it was, it took Ka'ina awhile to finish, and she was tired when
>she finally completed it. "Well, that should work. I'm going to leave now.
Get me once she wakes up. If she still is under the effects of the insanity
>spell when she wakes up, knock her out with this." Ka'ina handed her a vial
of some sort of smelling salts. "Just open it up; the scent will fill the
>room quickly and react with something else I gave her to make her pass out,
alright?"
>
"Got it," Akeru said with a nod. "Wait-- one question... During that whole
>fight, Immora kept producing weapons, firing ice, etc., but she never said
anything to make it happen. How could she do that? She's not an archmage
>yet..."

>"The insanity spell..." Ka'ina thought a moment, then continued again, "it's
been known to temporarily increase her power status to that of an archmage.
>There is a drink that exists --she didn't take it though-- that can be taken
by a mage to temporarily give them the ability to cast spells without the
>words like an archmage can, but it's dangerous to use and can only be taken
once. Any more usage would mean death."
>
"Oh... thank you."
>
Ka'ina left her then.
>
Akeru lay down on the bed next to Immora and waited patiently. She
>occasionally reached over to gently stroke her soft hair, gazing at her
pale face as she watched for some sign that she was awake.

>
After an hour, she was still unconscious. Akeru sighed to herself, resting
>her head on a pillow. She blinked slightly with surprise as a tear slid down
her cheek, followed by another. "Please be okay," she whispered. "I'll give
>anything if you will just be alright." She cried for several minutes, then
wiped her eyes and sniffled. Going into the bathroom, she splashed her face
>with water then got a glass of cold water to drink. She walked back over to
Immora, still brushing tears away. As she sipped it, an idea formed in her
>head. Maybe... it could work, if she tried it. After all, she'd seen it
work before. And if it doesn't work, oh well, she'll wake up eventually.
>
Leaning down, Akeru tossed the water onto Immora's face, hoping for it to
>wake her up. She practically screamed with happiness as it did and Immora
shot awake with a great deal of gasping and coughing.

>

>
Akeru broke away then, and Immora reeled slightly, lying back

against the

>pillows. It was so odd to experience memories from someone else's point of
view, especially when she could see herself in them. Not to mention seeing

>just what she'd done.

>Immora shuddered and suppressed a sob. How could she have attacked Akeru
like that? Akeru hugged her tightly, and Immora felt a powerful sensation

>engulf her as she remembered a feeling she'd received from those memories,

the feeling of overwhelming love towards her that Akeru felt. Immora buried

>her face against her shoulder and cried. "I'm so sorry... I'm so sorry..."
she whispered over and over.

>
Akeru stroked her hair and gently hushed her. "It's not your fault that it

>happened... don't apologize for it..."

>Ka'ina burst into the room at that moment, a furious look on her face.
"Akeru! I told you to tell me when she woke up! I wouldn't have known except

>for when I sensed her energy!"

>Akeru snapped automatically, "Well, excuse me, I was taking care of her. I
think that's more important than informing you!"

>
Ka'ina was about to retort when Immora whispered, "Please don't fight..."

>Ka'ina, if it's something important, get it over with, otherwise just leave.
Got it?"

>
Ka'ina lowered her head, then stepped forward and handed her a vial. "I had

>someone make this for you... it's supposed to keep you from losing your

memory if you go insane again, that way you'll know what happened. It won't

>do anything for this time, but--"

>"That's alright, I know what happened thanks to Akeru. I appreciate this,
but I think you need to leave now."

>
Ka'ina turned and left as soon as she'd been told to.

>
"It must be hard for you to deal with two people loving you like this,"

>Akeru murmured.

>Immora couldn't help but laugh. "No, it isn't. Ka'ina is smothering and

possessive; I don't appreciate her feeling this way towards me, and if she

>ever tried to express it, I'd just ignore her. There's no conflict of

emotions there. You, however," Immora said, cupping her chin in her hand,

>"I will always be with you, and I want you to stay with me forever. I want

your love, I don't want hers." Immora leaned against her and sighed. "I

>could feel your love for me in those memories... I can't believe you can

feel so strongly for me..."

>
"Well, I do," Akeru whispered.

>
Immora touched her cheek and softly spoke a spell. Akeru gasped and blinked.

>"W-what was that?"

>"I wanted you to feel my love... you aren't upset, are you?"

>Akeru colored slightly. "Sorry, it's just... I didn't expect you to do that,
and to feel something so deep so suddenly..." she sighed and held her

>closer, fighting tears back. "Well, I suppose you know already what

I'm
trying to say."

>
"Yep..."

>
"Hmm... thank you... for sharing that with me."

>
"You're welcome... and thank you..." Immora sighed wearily, "I'm really

>tired still, I'm going to sleep, alright?"

>"Mmmhmm..."

>"You're tired too, aren't you? C'mon, lie down and rest."

>"Mmkay..."

>Immora sighed softly as lay back on the bed, holding Akeru in her arms. "I
love you."

>
"love ya too..."

>
Soon, they were both asleep, dreaming of each other.

>

>
Time: In a memory, approximately 500 years later

>Place: In a memory, the Gate of Time

>

>Setsuna was sitting in a wooden chair, calmly studying, when someone
suddenly teleported themselves into her realm. Without thinking, she quickly

>transformed into Sailor Pluto, her staff clenched tightly in her hand, and
raised it into the air to bring down onto the intruder. She didn't expect

>to be met with a roar of laughter.

>"Oh... heh heh... ha ha ha ha!... oh Setsuna, you should have seen the look
on your face! Ahahaha! *whew*, That was funny!"

>
Pluto's eyes widened in astonishment. "Immora?"

>
Immora grinned broadly at her. "Yup! It's been a long time since we first

>ran into each other on Quenhol, hasn't it? Well, most of my students are
gone for the time being; I gave them some time off to relax, so I decided,

>hey, why not drop in on the Guardian of Time?"

>Pluto blinked several times in surprise.

>"I know, I know, you're probably sitting there thinking, 'why didn't I sense
her coming? How come I didn't know any of these things were going on?' Well,

>to tell you the truth, I hid them! Ha ha ha ha! Yep, I hid them from you!
I can do that, y'know, with my magic and all..."

>
Pluto cocked her head slightly and said in a slightly puzzled voice, "Are

>you alright, Immora? You sound... rather excited, full of energy, almost
drunk. I've noticed you aren't usually like this... is everything okay?"

>
Immora laughed again. "Oh yes, everything's alright and--by the way, like my

>dress?" Immora gestured to the long lavender dress she wore. "One of my
students made it for me... anyways, things are fine, why do you ask?"

>
"Well, if your students are gone and you have free time, why aren't you..."

>well, I expected you to be spending your time with Akeru, not here."

>Immora giggled a bit. "I was spending time with her, and boy, was it fun,
but she told me she wanted to get some things ready and that I should go

>somewhere and have fun because it would take awhile to get everything
together. So, here I am, waiting for her to finish--"

>
"Were you drinking?" Pluto asked rather bluntly.
>
"_No_, I was not _drinking_. Alcohol disgusts me, don't worry;
about the
>only thing I could get 'drunk' on is magic... But that's beside the
point,
I'm just so excited and nervous wondering what she had
planned...
>*siiiighhhhh*... Sorry, where was I?"

>Pluto looked upwards and whispered to herself, "Why me?"

>"I HEARD THAT!"

>"Sorry."

>"If you don't want my company, I'll just leave-- _but_, I do have to
ask,
Akeru has always wondered why you took her from Earth and
wanted me to ask
>you if you'd be willing to talk to her about it sometime."

>"I wouldn't mind at all."

>"Thank you!" Immora chirped. She started walking all around, looking
in the
mirrors and at the tall gate. "Hmmm... you see everything
here, don't you?
>I wonder if you know anything about my past?" she mused. "I sure
don't..."

>Pluto didn't answer her and sat back down.

>"Hmmm, well, I'm going to go now and she if she's ready, bye bye!
Have a
nice 'time' watching time! Heh heh... oooo, that was a
lame joke wasn't it?"
>
"Well... yes... Goodbye."
>
Immora teleported away just before Pluto buried her face in her
hands and
>laughed hard. "Oh my God... I have never seen something so..." She
threw
back her head and continued to laugh, then wiped away a bit
of moisture that
>had gathered around her eyes from laughing so hard. "Thank you God
for
finally giving me a bit of humor in this long life..."

>

>
"Akeeeerrrrruuuu!!! Are you ready yet?" Immora called from the
hall.
>
"Almost, just give me another minute! Why don't you change into
something
>more comfortable?"

>Immora giggled slightly. "Comfortable as in casual? Because some
people
actually mean to put on something--"
>
"IMMORA!" Akeru shouted in a shocked voice.
>
Immora laughed loudly. "I think I'll just wear a robe then,"
Immora
>commented as she magically changed clothes.

>"That's alright... okay, I'm done, you can come in now."

>Immora opened the door to their room, her dark blue eyes widening in
awe.
Lit candles were placed everywhere, giving the room a soft,
beautiful glow.
>A meal had been set on the table, all the clutter was cleaned up,
and there
was a delightful vanilla smell lingering in the air.
Lying on what looked to
>be a recently made bed was Akeru. She grinned broadly at Immora.
"Come here,
I have some things to show you."
>
"Hmmm... What kind of things?" Immora asked teasingly as she
came over to
>her and crawled up the bed till she was leaning over her.

>Akeru laughed and answered, "Not like _that_."
>"Aww..."
>"Later, love, don't worry... Here, look at this."
>Immora took the object from her hands and frowned slightly, sitting back
on her heels. "It's a photograph of someone."
>
"Yep... When Setsuna brought me to this world, that was with me. I wasn't
really sure who it was for awhile. Something Setsuna did sort of... I don't
know how to put it, but it basically scrambled my head a bit. I wasn't sure
what things were real memories or dreams. I had no idea who that person in
the picture was, and forgot about it."
>
"And do you remember now?"
>
"I think so, but I to tell you some things, about my, actually, _our_ past,
>back on Earth."
>Immora looked up at her in surprise. "Our? You know something about my old
life?! But how--"
>
Akeru pressed a finger to her lips. "Don't ask, I don't think I could
explain it." Akeru carefully took the picture from her hands and set it
aside, then handed her several dozen sheets of paper covered front to back
>in typing. "Don't read that yet, alright? Ok... how to start... Well, you
know you are from Earth, right? And the country?"
>
Immora nodded. "America."
>
"Yeah, I lived there, wasn't born there though... Do you know how you got
>here?"
>"Well... Necros kidnapped me."
>"Do you remember _what_ happened though, the actual event?"

>Immora strained her thoughts hard, and responded, "Only very vaguely... I
see myself walking down a hallway with a few other people... and then I open
>a door and he's there, then we're at his school..." She gripped her head in
her hands. "I really don't remember the details that well."
>
"What about when you arrived at his school, do you remember things like, I
>don't know, your name, what you were wearing..."
>"I have no idea what my name was, believe me. I've tried for a long time to
find it out. What I wore..." she tapped her chin in her hand. "Actually, I
>do, strangely enough. Everything after I arrived at his school is fairly
clear, conversations during his classes are blurred a bit... I was wearing
>those blue pants, jeans are what they are called, right? Hmm, a black
shirt, black shoes..."
>
"Any jewelry? Happen to have anything in your pockets?"
>
"Well, yes, actually... a silver cross and a few rings, and I had in my
>pockets, let's see... lip balm, some tissues, drops for my... 'contacts'?...
and a photo... why?"
>
Akeru snapped her fingers and grinned. "You have a mark around your left
>thumb, don't you, a very slightly shiny mark from wearing a ring on it all
the time."

>
Immora blinked in surprise. "I really don't know," she said slowly, looking down at her thumb. "Well, what do you know... I do... Akeru, is this leading
somewhere? I'm sorry, but I don't see how this all connects."

>
"You'll see, don't worry..." Akeru told her. "Immora, you are from the same Earth as I am, you realize that? And in fact, if I am correct about all this
stuff, we knew each other, very well. I couldn't piece this all together before, but... Sorry, trailing off. When I was a teenager, a girl and I
were very much in love with each other. That picture is of her."

>
Immora felt her cheeks burn with jealousy. "Oh really?" she drawled in slightly cold tones.

>"Please don't get upset!" Akeru quickly threw in. "Just hear everything I
have to say. Okay, this girl and I were together for a few years. We had given each other rings... a sort of symbol of our love, if you will. I loved
her deeply, and we were ready to spend the rest of our lives together. One day, I found out she'd been kidnapped."

>Immora's eyes widened slightly. "Kidnapped..."

>"Some of her friends had been there when it happened, and said the abductor
was a tall man with long white hair, red eyes, dressed all in black. He was waiting for her in a classroom, and they disappeared suddenly in a flash of
light. I didn't believe the story about the sudden disappearance but... I knew she'd been taken away," Akeru's voice tightened with sadness.

>Immora looked down and murmured, "White hair and red eyes... like Necros..."

>"After I found out, I was devastated. I practically killed myself a number
of times, and I guess I lost it. I pretty much shut out all my memories and ran away, and was pretty much moping around feeling sorry for myself when
Setsuna took me away. All those memories were blurred, so I didn't remember these things for awhile, but if I'm right, that girl--"

>"Akeru, sorry to interrupt, I still have the rings I was wearing then, and
the photo from in my pocket, do you want to see them?"

>
"Yeah... If I see them, they'll probably confirm what I believe."

>
Immora produced them, and Akeru's face drained of all color. "Oh my God... I was right!" she whispered hoarsely. "Immora, look at that photo I showed you
earlier carefully, and look at the one you had with you. Tell me what you see in them."

>Immora frowned, and looked down at them. "Mine is a girl, looks to be
Oriental, black hair, brown eyes, yours is a girl with blond hair, pale skin, dark blue ey--" Immora's eyes widened and she gasped, the photo
sliding from her slackened grip. "She looks like me! She looks like me..."

>only younger, b-but..." She clasped her hands over her mouth, her

mind
reeling. "And mine... my God, she looks like _you_... I never noticed

>before... but... if that is you... why would I have had a picture of you?"

>"Those _are_ pictures of us," Akeru whispered. "As soon as those memories
became clear, I realized it..."

>
"Ohmigod..." Immora sat trembling with shock. "You mean to say... we were..."

>we... before I was taken here...?"

>Akeru nodded. "Look at those papers now, if you want... those are some
letters... I know I wrote some because my name is on them, and I believe

>that you are the one who wrote the rest, but the name is different."

>"But... how can you be sure that I'm really this girl from all those
centuries ago? And if I'm not, who is the girl in the picture I have?"

>
Akeru couldn't help but smile. "It would just be too much of a coincidence

>if you weren't... you have the rings I gave her, the kidnapping, how we just
happen to look exactly the same as the people in the pictures--well, we're

>obviously a bit older looking now, but still... you have the same mark on
your thumb that I remember her having..."

>
Immora looked down at the letters and quickly wiped away a tear that had

>just escaped her eye. "It's just so... I mean, to find out that we actually
knew each other before, loved each other..."

>
"I know, it's hard to believe at first," Akeru whispered, "but believe me,

>it's true..." Akeru hugged her tight and whispered a name softly.

>"Was that my name?" Immora asked as she closed her eyes.

>"Yes, it was..."

>"What's your name, your real name?"

>Akeru quietly told her, and Immora smiled. "Strange, I actually feel like I
remember it somehow... hmmmm... I'm too used to calling you 'Akeru' though to

>call you anything else." She closed her eyes as she leaned her cheek against
Akeru's. "mmm... I guess we really are meant to be together, aren't we, if

>we were together even before all this crazy stuff happened?"

>"I never doubted it," Akeru whispered.

>"Hmmm... it's funny... we both couldn't--well, I still can't--remember being
together so long ago, and we happened to meet and fall in love again..."

>
"I think it's wonderful... if I had remembered all those things and hadn't

>met you again, I would have been crushed to know I'd lost you because Necros
kidnapped you..."

>
They both sighed and held each other tighter for several long moments.

>
"I think we should save the reminiscing for a bit later; that dinner you

>prepared is going to go cold," Immora commented softly.

>"Sorry," Akeru said, pulling back. She helped Immora up and smiled sweetly
at her. "I could tell you so much about your life that you

don't remember,
>if you want to hear it."
>"After that big revelation, I think I'll keel over if I hear anything
else today!"
>
Akeru grinned at her and helped her up. "I'll definitely wait then... I
>don't think I'd like it if you keeled over."
>Immora laughed and walked over to the table with her. "Mmm... that smells
good," she said, sitting down and starting to eat.

>
After they finished, Akeru walked out with her to the porch adjoining their room. It was night out, but the moons shone brightly, lighting the surroundings. The stars twinkled and sparkled in their bed of indigo, occasionally hidden behind the patches of clouds that slowly moved across
the sky. "I can never get over how high up this is..." Akeru breathed.

>
The building where Immora taught her students was high up on a terribly steep mountain, and clung to the side of it, supported by magical spells to
keep it from falling off. Their room and porch were on the side that dropped off the most, so they could look down over the valley far below.
Even the tall trees barely reached this height, and they could only faintly make out the tiny dots of people walking around. The porch itself actually
jutted out from the side, supported from underneath by beams.

>
"I like it though," Immora said. "It's a beautiful view, and no one could just climb up to it and get in, unlike most of the other rooms here."

>"Yeah, it is nice... Hmm... it's starting to snow."
>"Where? I don't see any snow flakes."
>"Oh, sorry, you can't see it yet, I just felt it starting."

>Immora chuckled. "My own private weather forecaster," she teased.
>Akeru stuck her tongue out. "You're just jealous."
>"Oh _really_?" Immora stood up on the stone railing. "*sniff* You're hurting
my feelings; I'd take that back if I were you."

>
"Why should I? You are jealous that I have these elemental powers and you
>don't."
>Immora tested the wind with her finger. "Oh good, it's blowing west, that
should carry me well..."
>"You're not going to jump, are you?" Akeru asked in a panicky voice.

>
"Why not?" Immora leapt from the side.

>
Akeru let out a startled cry, and ran to the side where Immora was plummeting downward. "Oh damnit..." She dove over the side, frantically
contacting the wind guardians, asking them to buffer her fall.

>
Immora looked up at her, the speed of her fall blowing her hair in her face.

>"Decided to follow?" she shouted up at her lover. She laughed, and a blue
glow formed around her, slowing her to a stop in midair.

>
Akeru swore under her breath as she continued to fall. Immora reached out
>her hands and grabbed Akeru's, pulling her up close against her in a tight
hug to hold her up. "Couldn't stop, could you?"
>
"Wind is rather stubborn sometimes, it didn't listen when I asked it to
>help out."

>"I'm the only thing holding you up then... wow, we're pretty high up."

>Akeru looked down at the valley, then up at their porch. "Y-yeah... we
are... can we please go back up to our room now?"
>
"You don't like it out here, just floating in the air? I love it... flying
>is one of the most fun things, better than just standing in the air, but
it's still kind of thrilling, isn't it?"
>
"Immora, please..."
>
Immora frowned. "There's nothing to worry about. I won't let you go."
>
Akeru wrapped her arms tightly around her neck. "You better not... I really
>don't like this..."

>Immora hugged her closer to her. "We'll go back up in a moment, let me draw
in some more energy first so I don't drain myself." She felt around with her
>mind for a good energy source. "Hmmm... I need an air source... damn,
they're all ignoring me! That's odd... I've never been refused like this
>before..."

>Akeru shivered against her. "It's cold... can you please just bring us back
up?"
>
"If I don't get more energy, we won't make it very far." Immora searched
>around again. "Talk to those crazy wind elements. They are actually keeping
me from drawing in energy!"
>
"I'll try to get them to listen..." Akeru closed her eyes.
>"Ahhh, there we go."

>Immora's eyes glowed faintly as she drew in the energy she needed.
>"Going
up," she commented as they started to rise. "We'll be back to the porch in
>a little bit. Don't want to go too fast or it'll jostle us. I'm really just
using the magic to lift _me_, and you're going up since I'm holding on to
>you. I would cast a separate spell on you so I wouldn't have to hold on to
you, but I think you like it better in my arms, right?"

>
"Y-yes... but... Just don't let go," Akeru said between clenched teeth. "I
>don't care how we get up as long as I don't have to do it alone."

>When they were level with the porch but still several feet away from it,
Immora asked her, "You're afraid of falling, aren't you?"

>
"Yes, is there something wrong with that?"
>
"Not at all, I was just wondering... you jumped after me despite it?"
>
"I didn't think it through at all, actually, just instinct. I mean, you're
>immortal, so the fall wouldn't kill you, not that you'd let yourself

get
that far, but my instincts just took over... I saw you falling and wanted
>to rescue you."
>"My hero," Immora drawled teasingly.
>"Can we just go back to the porch now?"
>"Don't you trust me not to let you go?"
>"Yes, but I would really feel more comfortable back on the porch than in
midair..."
"Alright," Immora said, as they landed on the porch. "Better?"
>
"Much better..." Akeru breathed. She then shook her finger accusingly at
>Immora, "Don't ever do that to me again!"
>"Sorry! I was just kidding around, I really was, I didn't mean to upset
you," Immora looked at her with concerned eyes.
>
Akeru sighed and hugged her. "It's alright, you just really gave me a
>scare."
>Immora hugged her back. "Sorry again..." She looked up at the sky and
exclaimed, "Oh, wow! I can see the snow! There it is!"
>
They turned to look at the flakes slowly falling from the night sky. "It's
>pretty, isn't it..." Akeru murmured.
>"Mmmmm, yes, I like watching the snow..." Immora reached up and cupped
Akeru's chin. "But I can think of other things I enjoy looking at more."
>
Akeru smiled down at her. "Oh really? And that would be...?"
>
"You, of course," Immora murmured, leaning up to kiss her lips.
>
Akeru bent down and returned her kiss, then pulled back slightly and
>whispered, "Let's go inside, much warmer in there..."
>Immora followed her back in, closing the door behind them. She wrapped her
arms around Akeru's neck as they kissed each other again. Akeru drew her back away from the door, still wrapped in the embrace. Immora whispered
softly, "I love you, I will love you forever."
>
"And I love you eternally as well." Akeru gently lifted her into her arms
>and carried her back to their bed. Smiling sweetly, she set Immora down,
bending to kiss her again, but was stopped when Immora pressed her finger to her lover's lips. "What?"
>"Sorry..." Immora replied, "It's just..." she blushed faintly and turned
her eyes away. "You look really beautiful when you smile like that..."
>
"You always look beautiful," Akeru whispered.
>
Immora blushed faintly. "I-I'm wasn't saying that you aren't any other
>time, but--"
>"I know what you meant," Akeru broke in with a small grin. "Thank you."
>Immora smiled and kissed her cheek. "You always do. You know me better than
I know myself!"
>
"I do, don't I?" Akeru replied as she kissed her neck and shoulders.

>
"mmmmmm... Be careful, you almost knocked that candle over with your foot."

>
"Sorry, I'll put it out." Akeru blew it out, then started to go back over

>to Immora.

>"Might as well just put all the ones around here out. It's warm enough in
here without a fire going too; you don't want us to sweat from the heat, do you?"

>Akeru chuckled as she put the other candles out. "Actually, yes... Well, not
as a result of the temperature of the room but from other things..." she

>trailed off with a sly smile.

>Immora grinned at her and embraced her tightly when she'd finished putting
out the candles. "I definitely agree with that." They kissed again, and

>Immora looked over her lover's shoulder towards the door. "Lock the door
too," she whispered. "Don't want us to be interrupted, after all."

>
With a thought, Akeru turned the key in the lock, then she chuckled as she

>looked down at Immora, who'd slid under the blankets, pulling them up to
cover her bare skin as she tossed her robe on the floor.

"Have I finally

>taken care of everything?" Akeru asked.

>"Not really. You're still dressed, aren't you?"

>Akeru blushed. "Oh... that."

>"Yes, that," Immora laughed. When Akeru finished undressing, Immora wrapped
her arms around her neck again, kissing her lips passionately, then bending

>to kiss the side of her neck. Akeru moaned faintly and lay down next to
Immora, kissing her shoulders in return. Immora giggled slightly and gently

>nibbled her earlobe, running her fingers through Akeru's short hair. Akeru
cupped her chin and pressed her open mouth against Immora's and they slipped

>their tongues into each other's mouths. After Akeru pulled back, Immora held
the blankets up for Akeru to slip under as well, and laughed when Akeru

>immediately moved to kiss her again.

>A figure, leaning against the door outside their room, slowly slid to the
floor, crying. "It's not fair," she whispered to herself hoarsely. She

>clamped her hands over her ears as she heard laughter coming from inside,
followed by the sound of sheets being ruffled, and voices whispering to

>each other. "It has to end... one day, I'll stop it." She clenched her
hands into fists, pulling her hair tightly. Her eyes started glowing from

>her rage.

>"Oh Akeru! OH!!"

>The figure lay her head on her knees, her lips tightening in anger.

>"What are you doing here, Ka'ina?" someone walking down the halls asked.

>"Nothing, Kulju," she murmured.

>"You're blocking my way, you know. I wanted to ask the master something."
He combed his hand through his short brown hair and gazed at her with his

>puzzled, pale green eyes.

>"She's very busy, can't you hear?" Ka'ina muttered as Akeru's muffled cries
could be heard.

>
He blushed deeply. "Err... oh... I see... Well, I'll just wait until, umm,

>morning, during class. Uhhh, I guess I'll see you tomorrow..." he trailed
off.

>
"Leave me alone," Ka'ina muttered.

>
"Ka'ina, why don't you just come with me to the dining hall, get some

>dinner... I mean, you never get out and try to enjoy yourself. Stop
following Immora around and feeling sorry for yourself. You know she's not

>going to leave Akeru for you."

>Ka'ina lowered her eyes and murmured, "Is it _that_ obvious?"

>Kulju sighed. "Ka'ina, you've been my classmate for centuries now. After
awhile, you pick up on these things--" He winced as Immora's scream broke

>the air. "Uhhh... look, at least come with me and talk. You're just going
to make yourself miserable if you sit here listening to them h-- uh, you

>know. It's not like I expect you to fall for me or anything, I just want to
help out as a friend, ok? Please?"

>
"Fine," Ka'ina sighed, standing up and straightening her blue dress. She

>followed Kulju down to the dining hall.

>"A-Akeru... I thought I heard voices..."

>"mmm... I didn't hear a thing... then again I wasn't exactly concentrating
on that... *chuckle*..."

>
"_Akeru_!"

>
"*giggle* Sorry, love..."

>

>
Time: In a memory, about 300 years later

>Place: In a memory, the mage school, Quenhol

>

>Reading reading reading reading... it sure did get dull after awhile. Immora
was searching through a thick book for a spell, and had been for the past

>few hours. Damnit, where was it?! She had to finish before dinner, Sharra
was coming to dine with her and all her students. Search search search...

>oh no. God... why me?

>Immora carefully closed the book, rubbing her temples with her index fingers
to alleviate the pounding sensation in her head. All that reading to find

>that spell, and what happened? It was ripped out. She sighed and lay her
head on her arms, her hair spilling out onto the table in front of her. The

>bench she sat on wasn't quite comfortable, but right now, anything would do.
She almost went to sleep, then was startled when two hands covered her eyes.

>
"Boo. Guess who?"

>
Immora giggled and reached up to stroke the hands. "Hmmm... could it be

>Akeru?"

>Akeru grinned as she leaned over Immora's shoulder to rest her cheek against
hers. "However did you figure that out?"

>
"Who else would sneak up on me like that? Besides, you did a poor job

>disguising your voice, and I know the feel of your hands very

well."
>Akeru laughed a bit, hugging her from behind. "I should think so!"
>Immora smiled up at her and pressed her palm against her cheek. "So, what
are you up to?"
"Just wanted to check up on you. You've been locked up in here for hours.
">Did you find the spell?"
>Immora sadly shook her head, reaching to put out the candles she'd used for
light. "No, it had been ripped out--" Her voice cut off in a gasp of surprise as she accidentally knocked a candle over onto the book and it
started to catch fire.
">Akeru reacted much quicker than she did, her eyes shimmering for a moment as the fire disappeared. "There, no harm done."
>Immora let out the breath she'd been holding. "Thank goodness! There's still
some things in that book we could use... You stopped it pretty quickly."
">I've been getting better at controlling this stuff. I practice when you're busy with this." Akeru sat down next to her on the bench. "I'm not trying
to be rude... but do you really need to spend so much time on these spells?
">You're already so good at magic."
>Immora sighed and clasped her hand. "I wish I didn't... but I have to. It's
just... I don't know, it's hard to explain to someone who isn't a mage...
">you feel forced to keep working and working to get more powerful whether
you want to or not... In a way, it's a responsibility. If we didn't learn to control our powers, things would be pretty chaotic..."
">I just wish it took less time," Akeru grumbled. "I haven't seen you much
these past few months."
">Immora kissed her cheek. "I know, I'm sorry... Don't worry too much, we have eternity to spend with each other. I just need to keep studying for now...
once I make archmage rank, I won't have to do this so much."
">How long will it be till that happens?"
">Immora thought about it a long time. "I don't know. There's no real way to judge it. I wish I knew."
>Akeru sighed and rested her head on Immora's shoulder. "Oh well..." She then
sniffed a bit and raised her head again. "Immora, you're all dusty from these books and you smell like the wax..."
>Immora blushed a bit and laughed, embarrassed. "Ooops. I better go take care
of that before dinner. I don't think that it would make a terribly good impression on Sharra to show up like this."
>Akeru helped her up and they walked back to their room, locking the door
behind them. As Immora was turning on the water, she commented to Akeru, "You know, it never hurts to take a shower..."
">Hmm, I suppose I should take one too..." Akeru grinned a bit. "But don't
we have to meet your students in an hour? It takes you awhile to wash your hair."
>Immora smiled and took her hand, pulling her in behind her. "Well,

we better
save time then. C'mon, you can help me get all the tangles out."

>
Akeru laughed and shut the shower door. "Fine with me..."

>

>
Tap tap tap. Tap tap tap-tap-tap tap tap tap. Tap tap.
Tap-tap-tap-tap-tap.

>Ta--

>"Excuse me."

>Kulju looked up at Sharra, watching him with irritated eyes. "Ah, my queen?"

>"Would you please stop tapping your fork on your plate? It's bad enough
that she is running late, but it doesn't pass time any quicker when you do

>that."

>"Sorry."

>Sharra looked away and started talking again. Kulju sighed heavily. The
queen had been ten minutes early, and where was Immora? Twenty minutes late.

>It figures... The ruler of the world comes for a rare visit and the one
that she came to see isn't there for the arrival. Great.

>
Kulju picked up his fork and resumed his tapping.

>
Sharra glanced over at him once, but he was oblivious. She sighed in

>resignation and fiddled with the chain of pearls she wore on her forehead.
Someone burped loudly. He had to pass the potatoes to the girl sitting next

>to him. A man left in a hurry for the bathroom. Yep, very exciting, waiting
for the master to arrive. And where was Akeru? They could all hear the

>sound of the pipes carrying water to a shower, but--

>Oh. Kulju coughed to himself at the realization. Well, that answered _that_
question. He hoped they would finish soon and finally join everyone. Sharra

>was looking rather bored.

>Kulju stopped tapping his fork to his glass when the dining hall door
opened. His fellow students all looked up as well, falling silent. Immora

>and Akeru quickly took their seats, both blushing a bit.

>"My, my, twenty five minutes late," one of the older students commented with
a knowing smile. "Were you busy?"

>
The others laughed a bit and smiled, and the conversations resumed while

>they started pausing around the dishes to the couple's end of the table.

>"Sharra," Immora greeted the queen weakly, giving her a quick curtsy and
a hug. "It's been centuries. You're looking well."

>
"You too, Immora. I was beginning to wonder if I'd ever get to see you.

>You sure did take your time getting here."

>Immora cast a quick glance at Akeru. "Ahhh... yeah. Um, sorry about that...
completely lost track of time."

>
Sharra smiled faintly, looking over to Akeru as well, who now had a confused

>look on her face. "It's alright, I think I can understand why you would."

>Immora colored slightly and whispered to her, "Cloria, please, I'm already
embarrassed enough as it is!"

>
"Sorry. I don't get to talk to people often about anything other

than things

>involving my rulership, so any chance I get to have fun and have a _real_
discussion, I take, no matter how... well, embarrassing it may seem."

>
"In the future, try not to!"

>
Sharra laughed slightly and turned away while Immora started eating,

>listening to everyone else.

>"You know, Dacon, that wasn't very nice," Kulju said in a soft voice to the
woman next to him that had been teasing Immora and Akeru.

>
Dacon shrugged, flipping her red hair over her shoulder. "Oh well. We _all_

>know what they were up to anyways. Besides, as long as they don't get upset
over it, why not have a little fun by poking fun at them?"

>
Kulju was about to comment but fell silent when he felt Ka'ina's icy glare.

>Geez, what was she mad about now?

>"I suggest you stop harassing the master," Ka'ina hissed to Dacon, her eyes
still fixed on Kulju, however. "There's no reason to make those rude

>remarks."

>Dacon wasn't the slightest bit intimidated. "Calm down, Ka'ina. They're not
'rude,' and I was just teasing. Everyone knows that the master and Akeru are

>rather heavily involved and have been the past few centuries, so it's not
like we're spilling their secrets or anything. Besides, they make all sorts

>of innuendoes to each other when the rest of us are around. If they're
going to do that, we have a right to joke about it when they go through with

>them."

>Ka'ina seemed about to say something when Immora called out, "Dacon, could
you pass the syrup?"

>
Dacon answered warmly, "Of course, master," and passed it down the row,

>glaring at Ka'ina as she did so.

>Kulju whispered to Dacon, "Do you think she heard us?"

>"She's Immora, anything's possible!"

>Someone else was calling out to Immora, "You missed seeing Kreesh's antics
earlier. He had made the wine for us, and brought it in to present it,

>but tripped and spilled it all over Ralore!"

>Someone else piped up, "Yeah, poor thing, she just finished sewing that new
robe too, and Kreesh had to ruin it. You should have seen the lightning bolt

>she threw at him!"

>"It missed me though," the man in question said, "but man, if she'd hit--
Yowch! That thing was pretty powerful! Too bad you two were too busy with

>each other to see it happen."

>"Oh, I'm sure they don't mind missing it after what they were busy with when
it happened!"

>
The two started laughing while Immora slid back in her seat, red in the

>face, but she was still grinning widely. Akeru hid her face in her hands,
but she was laughing a bit.

>
"Ok, ok, enough of that," Immora said, "You've had your fun for tonight,

>give it a rest till tomorrow."
>"Oh, so something will have happened between now and then, eh? Geez, Akeru,
you must be pretty g--"
>
"_Kreesh_!!!"
>
"Ooo, you're in trouble now!" someone called out.
>
Immora stood up, wiped her mouth carefully with a napkin, and pulled a
>startled Akeru to her feet. "We should leave these _immature_ students
behind," she sniffed. "Sorry, Sharra, perhaps another time?"
>
"That's fine, we have all the time in the world, after all."
>
"Awww... we were just kidding around!"
>
Dacon nudged Kulju, then piped up, "You're just using this as an excuse to
>run off with her, aren't you? *Tch, tch* Setting a bad example for the
younger students..."
>
Akeru quickly replied to her, "We're in love! And we're old enough to do
>whatever we feel like!"
>"I'm not saying you can't," Dacon shrugged, "but my, my, so often!"
>"Eeek!" Immora squealed a bit, then quickly stammered a spell, sending a
brief rainshower at Dacon. Dacon stood up, shouting and cursing as she
>tried to keep from getting wet. Pretty soon, spells were flying everywhere,
none harmful, but all thoroughly irritating.
>
"This is worse than a food fight," Kulju groaned as a rabbit hopped across
>his dinner. He randomly dropped a head of lettuce on someone just as he
was knocked out of his chair by a large pillow. Dacon helped him up, then
>shouted out in surprise as Sharra joined in and tossed a huge bundle of
papers at her.
>
Akeru grabbed Immora's arm, laughing hard, trying to fend off the spells.
>"This was supposed to be a formal dinner, maybe you should put a stop to
this--"
>
Immora interrupted, "No way! We need a chance to have fun with our magic
>for once, this is the perfect opportunity to relieve stress!" She threw
a ball of yarn at someone right before ducking to avoid loudly quacking
>duck. "Besides, even Sharra is joining in. This is going to be great!"
>Akeru sighed in a "why me?" gesture, and started sending tiny bursts of
wind around the room, mussing people's hair and sending things in the wrong
>direction. A cloud of pink smoke ended up in her face, making her cough
a bit as she countered with a big rose bush popping out of the wall.
>
"This is nuts..."
>
"It's fun!" Immora insisted, avoiding a streak of color that would have
>turned her blue dress a hideously cute shade of pink.
>"_This_ is what you call fun..." Akeru said in a sarcastic tone.
>Immora grabbed her arm and pulled her startled lover up against her.
"Well,
mildly amusing I suppose... there are other things I'd find

much more
>entertaining..."
>"... There's a giant marshmallow flying at us."
>The two dove to the floor, the marshmallow smashing into a sticky lump on
the wall, then Immora tossed a plate up in the air, turning it into a bird, and sent it out at her students.
>"That sure did come at a bad time, didn't it?" Akeru commented.

>Immora grumbled a bit, "It sure did..."
>Sharra suddenly ran by, chased by a much shorter Elf, who was waving a
foam bat in the air while Sharra's hair kept changing colors. Kulju fell from the ceiling to land on a camel. Someone was singing an old Earth song
loudly, with abrupt halts to shout out "Hello!"
>
"Okay, now it's getting insane," Immora commented.
>
"Maybe you should try to stop them."
>
"If that's possible!" Immora stood up and started to speak, and was pushed back against the wall again by a gust of wind.
>"Whoops, sorry! I should have been more specific in telling it where to go."
Akeru went over to help her to her feet again. Immora just stared at her, looking as if she was trying to hold back a loud laugh. "What? Do I have
something on my shirt or some... thing?" Akeru turned bright red. "Oh my...
>gimmeyourcloakrightnow!"
>Immora burst out laughing then as she handed Akeru her cloak to wrap around
her torso. "Whoever made it disappear is going to get it..." Akeru growled.
>
"Heh heh... Hey, I didn't mind it!"
>
"_Immora_!"
>
Ka'ina suddenly fell by Akeru's feet with a familiar cloth wrapped around her ankle. Akeru pulled her shirt away and quickly pulled it back on. Ka'ina
looked dazed, and her hair was soaked in wine. Someone dragged her away, then there was a loud explosion as the chandelier shattered with a bright
glow of light.
>
"STOP!!!"
>
Everyone turned to see Immora standing in the center of the room, her eyes blazing brightly and sending blue highlights dancing across her hair and
her clenched fists. "It was fun at first, but you are getting _way_ too wild now. I want this mess cleaned up immediately. Sharra, come with me
please."
>
The students rushed to pick up things and tidy up. Immora placed her hand wearily to her forehead and started walking out of the room, trailed by
Akeru and Sharra. Akeru quickly raced to her side, catching her just as she stumbled and lost her footing.
>"Are you alright?!"
>Immora nodded slowly. "Sorry... I just... I didn't mean to do that... the
thing with the chandelier... I never thought it would wear me out so much
>... um, I'm very sorry about all this... geez, I was late getting there,
then my students got out of hand..."

>
"It's alright, there'll be other times," Sharra replied.

>
"If you still want to talk, we could go into the study in our private wing

>... Akeru, could you come too?"

>Akeru nodded and helped her as they entered their private section of the
complex. It held their bedroom, Immora's study, their observatory, things

>that they didn't want just anyone to barge into whenever they felt like it.
The doors only opened when they approached, or to someone they had entered

>into the system to allow access.

>Sharra sat down in a chair while Immora curled up against Akeru on the couch
across from it.

>
"How have things been, as far as the world situation?" Immora asked. "We

>don't hear much here."

>"Hmmm... well, the Assassins' Guild seems to be neutralized for the time
being. The Dragana have gone deeper into hiding, and the Dragons with them.

>The Katrisa have been seen more, however." She paused a moment.

"There
have been reports of... I don't know how to describe it, but they say that

>someone destroyed everything in the galaxy. We are unaffected here, of
course, but they say that everything has started over out there."

>
Immora sat up quickly. "Who did it? Where did this happen?"

>
Sharra produced a paper with a list on it, and quickly read over it. "It

>is believed that one called 'Sailor Saturn' is responsible. She was trying
to prevent a demoness from possessing her and taking her abilities. It

>happened on Earth." Sharra looked up at her. "You know of this girl?"

>Immora blinked a bit. "You could tell, eh? Well..." She rested her head on
her chin. "I know Sailor Pluto... the Guardian of Time... a teammate of

>hers. It just seems so strange to hear that... I can't believe it could
happen."

>
"You never know what will happen when Earth is involved."

>
"Earth's not _that_ bad," Akeru commented. "Not at all like here, of course,

>but it's still got good traits. Don't be so quick to judge it and its
citizens."

>
Sharra raised an eyebrow. "I apologize... but you have to understand, our

>information on other worlds is limited, and if we make judgements based on
what we hear, well..."

>
"Why don't you tell us what else is going on?" Immora quickly threw in, not

>wanting to listen to an argument.

>"Well, um, here's something you might be interested in. It's a rather silly
survey if you ask me, but the council decided they want to get an idea of

>what kind of people are living here."

>She handed the paper to Immora, who held it so Akeru could read it too.
"Hmmm... I guess we should take it; it would help out when it comes time to

>making decisions," Immora said quietly.
>"Thank you... just send it back when you finish... um, well, I better be
leaving now. Goodbye."
>
"Goodbye. Talk to you later."
>
Sharra closed the door quietly behind her, and they could hear the loud
>click of the wing's doors seal after she left.
>Immora carefully set the paper on the floor, lying back on the couch, then
looked up at Akeru. "Maybe we should go back to the palace sometime, to
>take a break from things."
>Akeru tucked a piece of hair behind Immora's hair as she crawled over to
lean over her. "I'd like that. We need a break from this place."
>
"Something wrong with it?"
>
"I would just like to be alone with you sometime. The palace is nice, great
>accomodations, and we could reserve a spot far away from anyone else." She
kissed her forehead and whispered, "It's been awhile since we could simply
>enjoy each other's company for weeks on end."
>Immora smiled slightly and gently caressed her cheek. "Well then, give me
tomorrow to tell my students that I'll be leaving temporarily, then we can
>be off, alright?"
>Akeru nuzzled her face against Immora's neck, making her giggle a bit. "The
sooner the better... I can't wait to be alone with you."
>
"We're alone right now, love..."
>
Akeru bent to kiss her lips delicately. "Yes, but there's always the chance
>that something could come up and you'd have to go off and teach, or someone
would have a problem with a spell... that nut Ka'ina could bother you..."
>
Immora quickly hushed her. "Akeru, don't worry about her, I don't want her
>around me either. I only let her stay because it's... oh, it's another
stupid mage thing, I'm really the only one qualified to teach other mages,
>and if someone goes untrained, it could be horrible for everyone else."

>"I still hate her."
>Immora kissed her cheek and hugged her. "Please, let's not think about that,
okay? I don't want to worry about anything else right now, I want to
>concentrate on _you_.
>"Fine with me." Akeru slipped her arms around to Immora's back, holding
her close while she kissed her.
>
"... let's just stay here, I'm too tired to move."
>
"If you want," Akeru replied, laying her head on Immora's chest.
>"Anything
>for you."
>Immora smiled, running her fingers through Akeru's black hair. "If you are
uncomfortable--"
>
Akeru grinned and rubbed her cheek up against her. "This is quite
>comfortable, don't worry."
>"... oh."
>"You're blushing again."
>"You're the one who made me."

>Akeru laughed and sat up. "You always seem to get flustered when I say
things like that to you. Even after all this time, you still blush."

>
Immora shrugged and sighed. "Can't help it... I just get easily affected

>by what you say. And of course, that's because I love you."

>Akeru smiled and held her hand. "I love you too."

>Immora reached up and pulled Akeru down onto her again. "We should get
some rest. I'm too tired to stay awake anymore."

>
"Sleep well," Akeru whispered as she bent towards Immora.

>
"Sleep well," Immora murmured as she gently kissed her lips.

>

>
Time: In a memory, about 1,500 years later

>Place: In a memory, the mage school, Quenhol

>

>Immora looked up from the text she was explaining to her students as Akeru
walked into the room. A smile lit her face immediately and she set the book

>down, running over to her. Akeru laughed and pulled her into a tight hug.
"Miss me?"

>
"Of course I did! You sure must have asked Setsuna a lot of questions during

>your visit, you were gone two weeks!"

>"Two weeks, I know, such a long time compared to the thousands of years
together, right?" They laughed together. "Yeah, we talked a lot, and she was

>able to answer all my questions. I shouldn't have waited so long to do it!"

>Akeru followed Immora over to sit by her at the long table where her
students had gathered. Several younger students were giggling and whispering

>to each other, while the older ones cast them dark looks.

>"Well, back to the projectile fire spell," Immora began. "You said here,
Dacon, that you didn't understand the inflection needed?"

>
Dacon nodded. "I used a hard 'g' like you told me, but there's still

>something not working right."

>"Why don't you try it for me, ok?" The student spoke the spell, and Immora
winced. "Okay... you reaaaally need to watch those 'r's, okay? They're not

>so much of an "eruh" sound as they are an "arah", so this word here would
be..."

>
She continued to explain as the other students were looking over other

>spells, trying to work them out. Akeru yawned and lay her head on the
shorter woman's shoulder. Immora paused in midsentence when she did so, then

>started talking again.

>"Excuse me, master," her eldest student, a male Pure Elf, spoke up. "I was
wondering, as we've been studying under you, have you been working on your

>own to progress your abilities?"

>Immora grinned and looked down at Akeru. "Actually, I wanted to wait until
Akeru got back to mention this, but since she is..." she looked up with a

>wide grin, "I've finally done it! I've attained archmage status!"
>There were gasps all around the table, several cheers, and stunned silence
from some. "B-B-But how can you be sure?!" Ka'ina gasped.
"That places you
>even higher above us than before! Are you certain?!"
>Immora narrowed her eyes in puzzlement. "Of course I am! I don't have to say
anything to cast a spell anymore. That's the mark of an archmage. It's not
>that hard to notice unless you're ignorant."
>Ka'ina blushed with shame and refused to say anything else.

>Immora looked down at Akeru and chuckled. "Aren't you proud of me, love? I
just became probably the first archmage in who knows how long, and you
>haven't said a thing. Aren't you going to congratulate me?"

>Akeru's eyes twinkled as she lifted them to gaze into Immora's, and she said
softly with a grin, "Oh yes, definitely... but wait till we're alone..."
>
Immora blushed and looked back up to her students, who were all chuckling
>and giggling, except for Ka'ina. "Um... er... well, any more questions?"
>Someone piped up, "You're just eager to go back to your room for that
congratulations, aren't you?"
>
"About the spells!!!!" Immora said, her face turning fiery red.
>
"Yeah, about this invisibility spell, what would be the best source to draw
energy from? I can't figure it out."
>"Hmmm, I usually draw from the air for that one, since it's mainly the air
around you that obscures you from si-IIiiGhT! AKERU!! I'm trying to
teach!!!"
>Her students stared at them with wide-eyes as Immora pushed the grinning
Akeru off of her. "What just happened? What did she do?" Kulju asked.
>
"You don't want to know," someone told him.
>
"Wh-why don't we just stop f-for today, alright?" Immora stammered.
>
Akeru pulled her to her feet and swept her up in her arms. They left with a
>collective shout of, "Goodbye, master, have FUN!" following them.
>"You've just embarrassed me in front of them again, you know," Immora
gripped.
>
"They've been doing that for centuries..." Akeru commented, shifting her
voice to a sultry purr, "and I'll make it worth your while."

>"Oh, I know you will, I just feel like teasing you, that's all."

>"Save it for later, m'love, we'll have time to talk afterwards..."
>After entering the room, Akeru shut off the lights so it was pitch black.
Immora was about to create a light when Akeru called from somewhere, "Before
>I 'congratulate' you, I have another surprise for you!"
>The light came on again and Immora looked around to find where Akeru

had
gone to. Her gaze went upward and she sat up in shock. "WHAT are you doing

>on the CEILING?!"

>Akeru was sitting quite calmly upside down on the ceiling. She grinned and
lowered her hand to Immora, and she saw that the amplifier rings were

>glowing. "Guess what?"

>"W-What?" Immora was still quite startled by Akeru's sudden appearance up
over her head.

>
"I've gotten great control of these things now, and..." she put her hands

>on the ceiling, pushed herself so the rest of her body was hanging off, and
dropped gently down onto the bed, "I'd like to give you a present."

>
As Akeru was pulling her into a hug, Immora asked, "Oh? What kind of

>present?"

>"My soul... at least, part of it."

>Immora pushed her away, blinking rapidly from surprise. "What do you mean,
your soul?"

>
Akeru smiled at her and held up two identical necklaces. They both had a

>smooth, dark blue gem hanging from a silver chain. "Well--" she started.

>"Wait, those are..."

>"I know, the typical necklace one Quenholitian gives to another as a sign
of love. I thought it would be cute. They've caught on in the other planets,

>actually... but may I finish?"

>Immora colored slightly and nodded. "Sorry."

>"It's alright. Anyways, I've been doing some research with my little friends
the elements--" Akeru suddenly winced as if pinched.

"Sorry, fire sometimes

>gets a bit angry when I use nicknames-- OW!"

>Immora couldn't help but giggle a bit. "Why don't you just keep talking and
ignore them for now?"

>
Akeru rubbed her head. "Yeah... Anyways, a love guardian gave me an

>interesting idea... it goes beyond these simple necklaces." She fastened
one around the skeptical Immora's neck, then the other around her own. "It

>said that there's a way to actually infuse something such as this with a
bit of your own soul, as much as you can and still remain the same, that is.

>It's a bit... well, you have to completely trust the other person, I mean,
the necklace won't just break or anything unless the person is injured or

>dies, and if injured it repairs itself later... but you become quite close,
your thoughts can be heard always, your life is pretty much in their hands

>... because if you really want to, you could destroy it, and thus destroy
them. Not just anyone could, mind you, only the one that it was given to...

>but as you can tell, it's..."

>Immora hugged her before she could say more. "Oh Akeru... I... I love you...
I'll only let you give this to me if... if you'll take mine as well."

>
Akeru tilted her chin towards her and gently kissed her. "Of course... I

>love you..." She took all her rings off except two. "Now, let's

summon a
love guardian, shall we? And a life guardian as well..."

>
Immora was startled to see two strange wispy images appear before them. One

>was entirely colored in pink tones, the other in a bright silver.

"W-what?"

>"They're manifestations of the elements, as close to being physical as they
can be." Akeru took her hand and smiled sweetly at her.

"This is going to

>sound funny to say, but for this to work..." she hugged her tightly, making
Immora almost lose her breath, "well, we have to get as close together as

>we can."

>"--I can't breathe--"

>Akeru loosened her grip and blushed a bit. "Okay, maybe that was too close!"

>She turned to the guardians and nodded, then surprised Immora by swiftly
moving to kiss her mouth. Immora wrapped her arms around her neck as a

>strange energy started enveloping them. It felt strange... what was...

>Oh, it was incredible! Their thoughts... she could know both of theirs at
once, communicate without words... it was so incredible... She opened her

>eyes to see Akeru now standing on the other side of the room, but she still
felt as if they were holding each other, the feeling of having her soul with

>her...

>Akeru's thoughts were echoing her own. Immora cried with joy, running to
hug her again. Why didn't they do this sooner, it was so wonderful...

>
She knew what would happen before it did, because, after all, she knew what

>her lover was thinking. It was a perfect kiss...

>"Thank you," they both said at the same time, then laughed in unison.

>Immora didn't bother to speak, she knew Akeru could feel her happiness.

>The guardians disappeared with a command from Akeru. "I still need to
congratulate you," she murmured.

>
"You realize you don't even have to speak anymore..."

>
"I know how you love hearing my voice."

>
"... True."

>
They kissed again, and Immora drew her towards the bed. They lay back, still

>holding each other tightly. She could feel Akeru's excitement, and kissed
her passionately. "Do we have to keep the necklaces on to... I don't know

>how to describe this sensation..."

>"Uh, yes..."

>"Hmph. They're going to get in the way some... oh well, it'll be worth it,
won't it?"

>
Akeru's answer was a warm kiss as she slipped her dress off, followed by

>her own clothes. Immora was overwhelmed by the feeling of love she was
receiving, and sensed Akeru feeling the same. She kissed her again, gently

>caressing her bare back, her thoughts speaking to tell Akeru how much she
loved her. Akeru pushed her back onto the bed and kissed her way down her

>neck and chest, making Immora shiver as she could sense what Akeru had
>
>
Yes, it was _definitely_ perfect.
>
>
Immora stirred and slowly opened her eyes. "Mmmph... ugh, wake up, Akeru,
>it's dark out now." She shook the other woman's shoulder.

>"Huh? Wha..."

>"It's dark out. We should go get something to eat; I'm starving. Are you not
registering my thoughts or something?"
>
Akeru sat up groggily. "In a minute... boy, are you hungry, I don't want
>to feel that!... I can't concentrate on my own thoughts much less yours...
wow, my head has this weird pounding feeling..."

>
"Probably because you hit it on the head of the bed earlier, remember?"
>
"Oh yeah... Sorry, I'm not quite awake yet..."
>
Immora smiled and kissed her lips. Akeru grinned up at her. Immora could
>feel a rush of thoughts going through both their heads, then they laughed.
"I definitely agree... that certainly was _incredible_..."
>
"... the best," Akeru murmured softly, wrapping her arms around her.
>
Immora blushed a bit, then ran her index finger along her soft lips before
>kissing them gently. It certainly was... she didn't care how embarrassed
Akeru was going to feel as she started thinking about just how great it
>had been. Akeru turned a bright shade of red from her lover's thoughts.
Immora laughed a bit, blushing as well as Akeru got to remembering, then
>settled back into her arms for another tight hug. "It's great having this
bond, isn't it?" she murmured. "I never thought it would be as amazing as
>>this just by being able to feel each other and our thoughts, but it really
makes things... just so perfect, to be able to know what you're feeling as
>it happens, to feel your love each time you touch me..."

>Akeru's thoughts echoed her own. Immora smiled and pulled away to get
dressed. She stood up and stretched, and was starting to light the candles
>when she noticed someone huddled in the corner. "Huh? Who's there?" she
grabbed a sheet from the bed and wrapped it around herself.
"How'd you get
>in here? C'mon, answer or--" Immora let out a startled gasp.
"Ka'ina, what
are you doing here?"
>
Ka'ina looked up at her and rose shakily to her feet. "I am sick... and
>tired... of this."

>"What are you talking about?" Immora asked, magically altering the sheet
into a dress. She looked back at Akeru, who nodded and quickly dressed, her hand slipping into a drawer of the nightstand for her gun. Her hand
involuntarily went to clutch her necklace, and she could sense Akeru's nervousness matching her own. Akeru wanted to kill... Immora had to

keep
both of them calm somehow, keep them from starting a fight...
Akeru's anger
>abated slightly, not feeling so murderous. Her apologetic thoughts calmed
them both somewhat.
>
"All this... you don't care about us, do you?" Ka'ina started walking
>towards her, and Immora started backing up. "Teach us a little magic, then
run off again with _her_... you deserve better than her, Immora. She's just
>a heap of trash out of the gutter. You need an equal, like me."

>"Ka'ina, you're just babbling, you know. I do care about my students. And
your remark about Akeru was very rude. If anyone here is undeserving, it's
>me; she's much more wonderful than someone like me deserves to have."

>"What type of garbage has she been telling you then?! Leave her, Immora."

>"No," Immora said firmly, moving to stand by Akeru. "I love her dearly, and
I won't leave her for any reason, especially not for you."
>
Ka'ina's multihued eyes narrowed. "Oh really?" There was a flash of light
>as the room disappeared from around them, and they found themselves standing
in the midst of an empty realm.
>
"What the--" Akeru's gaze darted quickly back and forth. "Where are we?"
>
"You're on my turf now," Ka'ina sneered. She clenched her fist and a sword
>appeared in her hand.

>Immora's heartbeat was pounding fast. What was going on? How was Ka'ina
managing these spells without saying a thing? Her own sword appeared in
>her hand as Akeru raised her gun. Neither were going to hold back now...

>"Oh yes, the spells... I took a little something before I came to your room
so I'd temporarily have archmage-like status... should come in handy... heh
>heh, You know what? I still have that odd little curse on me... everytime
I try to cast a helpful spell on someone, it gives me the chance to
>influence them, control them, etc... I've been practicing it, just for you."

>"Ka'ina, cut this out. We don't want a fight," Immora warned.

>"That's just too bad, because I'm looking to hurt someone, namely Akeru!"

>Ka'ina broke into a run, her sword raised high over her head to strike Akeru.
Akeru's eyes widened and she started rapidly firing her gun at Ka'ina. The
>bullets struck over and over, but Ka'ina was somehow healing them before
they could do any real damage. Immora tried to cast a spell, block Ka'ina,
>something, but she couldn't budge, and her mind couldn't lock onto any
energy. Frantically trying to summon energy and move, she screamed in her
>mind to Akeru, Run! Run, quickly! She's made it so I can't do anything!
No magic, no movement, no speech... Get away from her!
>
She was terrified, could feel Akeru's fear... she tried to calm

Akeru, but

>what could she do? A madwoman was out to destroy them...

>Akeru dashed quickly away from Ka'ina, twisting her arm back to continue
firing bullets. Immora looked on after her as Ka'ina started gaining,

>picking up speed, then leapt off the ground to soar high into the air. As
she started to descend almost faster than their eyes could track, Akeru

>looked around in horror. Wherever she ran to escape, Ka'ina was going there.
She broke into a dead run in Immora's direction, her face flushed with

>exhaustion from running and from fear. Ka'ina cackled and shouted a
triumphant, "Yes!" as she teleported.

>
For a few long moments, Akeru and Immora stood, side by side, nervously

>wondering where she was. Oh God, I was so scared, Akeru was thinking. The
elements weren't responding... I know you gave me the protection spell and

>all, but it's been getting weaker lately and--

>Her words broke off into a horrified scream as Ka'ina appeared right in
front of her. She laughed widely as she slashed her sword downward in a

>long arc. Her sword tore deep into Akeru's chest, the blade slicing through
to emerge sickeningly from her back and splash blood across the ground.

>Ka'ina drew her sword out, kicking the screaming Akeru to the ground.

>Immora screamed her lover's name loudly, her voice filled with horror as she
finally was able to move. The necklace around her neck burst into tiny

>shards. Dropping down immediately to Akeru's side, she clutched her torn
form to her. "No no no no," she sobbed, tears streaming down her cheeks.

>"Akeru!" she screamed again. She desperately tried to heal her, but the
energy refused to come to her, and she frantically tore off pieces of her

>dress to try and stop the bleeding. "Please don't die oh please..." Akeru
was losing strength quickly... she was so scared... Immora tried soothing

>her, tried to keep her from leaving... how could this happen? Akeru was
trying to keep Immora calm as well, but only her thoughts were doing

>anything, her body couldn't help.

>Akeru's face was deathly white and contorted with pain, and she couldn't
speak a word. Ka'ina stood over them, laughing wildly.

"It won't work,

>Immora! Try as you may, it won't work!" She lifted the sword and struck
the back of Immora's head hard with the handle, knocking her to the ground.

>She could feel Akeru's anger at that action immediately, wishing to move.
Dazed and in both physical and emotional pain, Immora looked up at Ka'ina

>and tried to speak, her voice coming out as an inaudible, choked whisper.
"I don't know what you just said," Ka'ina murmured. "If you want to know

>why I struck you, well, it gives me something to heal, and something to
heal," she grinned, "means a chance to control you!"

>
She lifted her hand, her palm facing Immora, and started the

spell, and
>stopped in shock when Akeru managed to reach out and tightly grip the hem of
her dress. Akeru slowly lifted her eyes to her, grimacing with pain, and
>managed to whisper, "I... hate... you... You... will... pay... for...
hurting... Immora!"
>
"Mmm hmm... and _you_ will be the one to punish me, I'm _sure_."
Ka'ina
>pushed her away and started the spell again.

>Immora dizzily crawled to Akeru, grabbing her hand tightly in her own. "Oh
Akeru," she sobbed, "please, please be alright... I love you, I don't know
>what Ka'ina's going to do to me, but no matter what, I want you to live, and
be happy, and remember that I love you and somehow we'll be together..."
>
Akeru shakily opened her eyes, and whispered in a trembling voice, "i love
you..." before closing her eyes tightly.

>Immora felt her heart skip a beat from fright, but saw that Akeru was still
breathing, if very faintly and painfully. Her thoughts were a blank, she was
>unconscious, but she could still feel the remnants of her last thoughts
before blacking out, her intense love... She almost sighed with relief that
>Akeru was still alive, but it was changed to a loud cry as Ka'ina's magic
washed over her. A searing pain filled her mind, and she screamed out as
>she tried to block it out and failed, her mind being claimed in a wave of
blackness as she fell unconscious.
>

>
"unhhhhnn... where... am I?" Immora slowly opened her eyes. She was lying
>in a bed in a medical facility, and the faint feeling of magical healing
lingered over her. "who..."
>
She looked over and saw Ka'ina there, smiling at her; curiously enough, the
>sensation of healing coming from her as well. "Are you alright? That
Dragana was pretty vicious when she attacked you. The doctors say you may
>have some memory damage, some things a little blurred, but you'll otherwise
be ok."
>
Immora tried to sit up, but found that she couldn't. She was simply too
>weak. "I don't remember what happened," she whispered.

>"She swooped down before you had the chance to react and jabbed her claws
into the back of your head. I barely made it out as well. One of the
>students happened to be walking by and rescued us."

>"huhhh..." Immora shut her eyes. "Ka'ina... how old am I?"

>"??? 3,000 something, why?"

>"I can't remember hardly anything. I can see you and my students, but almost
everything is a blur."
>
"An unfortunate result of the attack, I'm afraid."
>
"Oh." Immora stared up at the ceiling, an empty feeling going through her.
>What's going on? Something isn't right here, but what? Something was wrong,
something missing... her neck felt like she should be wearing something

>there, but where was it? She felt empty, alone... She looked over at the
room next to her. She caught a faint glimpse of black hair and the sound of

>someone trying to talk before the door shut hard. "Who was that?"

>"No one!" Ka'ina immediately responded in a fearful voice.

>Immora eyed her quizzically. "Oh alright."

>Ka'ina smiled at her. "Sorry, I-I've just been so nervous worrying about you,
m'love." She bent down and kissed Immora on the forehead.

>
Immora tried not to show it, but inwardly she was frowning. Strange... her

>memories seemed to show that Ka'ina was her lover but... it didn't seem
right, fabricated almost... she didn't feel any emotion go through her when

>Ka'ina kissed her. Weird... She smiled up at Ka'ina to hide her discomfort.
"Sorry, I was just thinking to myself. So, when can we leave?"

>
Ka'ina grinned. "Don't worry, it'll be soon."

>
Not soon enough... Immora thought to herself. I need to get answers, and

>fast. What's really going on here?

>

>Time: In a memory, about three weeks later
Place: In a memory, the mage school, Quenhol

>

>
Immora was very surprised when she received a transmission from the queen

>in her communications globe. She quickly ran over and placed her hands on
the globe to accept the signal.

>
"Immora, you're looking well," Sharra remarked.

>
"As are you, Sharra. What can I do for you?"

>
"I'm interested in joining your school, actually. I have pretty much honed

>my sorcery, but I am curious about magic. If you are willing to have me as
your student..."

>
Immora tapped her finger to the side of her cheek. "My queen, you do realize

>that it could be painful to use magic... I know it was extremely painful for
me whenever I used sorcery, so now I avoid it whenever possible."

>
"I understand the risks involved, but I wish to learn anyways."

>
"... Alright. Come here tomorrow and I'll assign you quarters and you will

>begin to learn the basics of magic."

>"Why tomorrow?"

>Immora laughed slightly. "You need time to organize things, don't you? If
you're here, who will run the world, hmmm?"

>
"Ah, I see... Well, tomorrow then. Thank you, Immora. Goodbye."

>
"You're welcome, Sharra, farewell."

>

>
Sharra arrived the next day by a teleportal formed by sorcery. Sharra

>closed the teleportal behind her and smoothed her long purple hair. The
dress she wore was a faded sky blue, circling her throat but baring the

>arms and shoulders, the sides of the skirt slit, falling to her

knees, with
the usual trimmings done in silver instead of gold. She'd painted her lips

>a pale, silvery purple, her eyelids dusted with white, setting off the
string of pearls on her forehead. The sandles she wore for shoes were

>silver, the soles thin with a slender strap across her toe area, then up
above her heel, with long laces tied near her knees.

>
Immora wore a dress more befitting of a villager than an archmage. The

>top was a dull fuschia, the curving v-neckline trimmed thickly in a darker
version of the shirt color, and the sleeves had cloth clasping them every

>few inches leaving poofed portions of cloth extending from her arms. The
skirt portion was purple and fell to the floor. She wore no makeup, and her

>hair was worn down, parted slightly off-center.

>"My queen, it's been such a long time," Immora said as she walked up to
Sharra. "I don't quite remember when we met!"

>
"Well, it's been awhile, hasn't it?" Sharra responded. She was about to say

>more, when her eyes unfocused slightly, then focused again. "Yes, it has."

>Immora looked at her quizzically. "You alright?"

>"Yes, I... can't seem to say what I want to say. hmmmm... Oh well."

>Sharra followed Immora as the archmage led her to her room, allowing her to
transport her things into the quarters. She then followed her into a large

>study hall.

>"Here's where the beginners start out," Immora told her, gesturing to five
students pouring over the books. "Right now, they're reading to learn about

>the elements commonly drawn upon, so they will have an idea of what to draw
on when casting a spell. Take a seat anywhere you'd like."

>
Sharra sat down while Immora pulled a book off a shelf, then brought it over

>with her as she sat down at the table. She opened up to a page, and set the
book in front of Sharra, but held up a warding hand to tell her not to read

>it yet.

>"I haven't made studying sorcery a big chore, so I don't know all the
differences between our two forms of spellcasting. I'm going to teach you

>things the way I teach to everyone else, and if I happen to be going over
things that apply to sorcery as well and therefore seem repetitious, oh

>well. Any questions so far?"

>"Not really," Sharra chuckled, "except... you seem to be in a hurry of some
sort. You started immediately on this."

>
Immora shrugged. "The sooner we finish, the better, right? Since you already

>know one form of spellcasting, it'll be easy to pick up on another. It'll
be much quicker for you than these other students who've had no experience

>whatsoever in spellcasting. Now, let's start with the idea of what magic
is and work from there."

>
Sharra suddenly wondered if this was really a good idea.

>

>
Ka'ina closed the door to her room with a sigh of relief. She'd caught
>Sharra with the spell just in time. Sharra wouldn't remember ever having
known Akeru, just like how Immora's students wouldn't either. A necessary
>precaution, if she was going to keep Immora from breaking free of her
control. The spell on everyone would last as long as Immora's, and once
>hers was broken, _if_ it was broken, they'd all remember Akeru as well.

>She lifted a wine bottle and took a long drink. She was tired from casting
these spells so often. Everyone that came in contact with Immora had to
>have that spell put on them, which meant hovering around every instant to
prevent a slipup.
>
She dropped the now-empty bottle and flopped onto her bed with a sigh. The
>things I do for love...

>

>Time: In a memory, about five years later
Place: The palace, The Moon Kingdom
>

>
It was strange to walk around this place... The Moon was so different from
>Quenhol, the palace's architecture unusual, but pretty. Immora hadn't
been here for years, when she had introduced some of her students to this
>place to spread the training of magic. The queen's young daughter, Serenity,
had taken an immediate liking to her, quickly becoming her friend of sorts.
>Immora felt strange about the friendship, but had to admit to herself that
at least this little girl listened to her when others wouldn't.
>
She approached the palace cautiously, slowly opening the door. The guards
>didn't seem surprised by her abrupt entrance. She walked down the halls to
Serenity's room and silently slipped through the partially open the door.
>
Serenity sat on her bed, brushing her long silvery hair. She was perhaps
>ten now, judging from her appearance. She looked up at Immora when she
finally noticed she was here. "Immora, good to see you again," she greeted
>formally.

>"Princess," Immora said, curtsying slightly. "Good to see you as well. How
may I be of service?"
>
Serenity laughed softly. "You're silly sometimes, you know?"

>
"You started it with that ridiculous greeting."
>
"I have to act like a lady. Mother is getting ill, and I may have to take
>her place in a few years. My marriage is already arranged."
Serenity's
voice grew bitter on the statement. "When I'm fifteen, it will be carried
>out, and by the time I'm twenty-one, I'm supposed to have a child. It'll
be named after me if it's a girl, who knows what it'd be if it's a boy."
>
"That must be terrible," Immora murmured, looking out the window. "I can't
>imagine what it must be like to be in your position."

>"It's rather bothersome. The boy I'm supposed to marry is from the family
>that built this palace. He's very dull."
>
"Not mature enough for you, I suppose?" Immora shifted her weight and
>watched the clouds with an uncomfortable look.
>"That about sums it up... I'd rather marry Zore, he's much nicer and smarter
>than-- Immora, are you alright?"
>
Immora jumped a bit. "Fine, Serenity!"
>
Serenity frowned at set her brush down, walking over to the much older
>archmage. "Are you sure? You always get so... I don't know, you just seem
>a bit nervous when I try to talk to you about boys."

>
Oh great, Immora thought, I do not want to explain this!

>
"Immora?"
>
"What?"
>
Serenity looked away a moment, then asked quietly, "Mom says some people
>like people their own gender. I don't think there's anything wrong with
>that. Do you...?"
>
"... Yes..."
>
Serenity just giggled a tiny bit. "Oh Immora, I'm sorry!"
>
"Huh?"
>
"I've been trying to tell you about all these guys and you could care less!"
>No wonder you never want to talk to me about them!"

>Immora kept blinking and staring with a confused look. "Huh?"

>"As old as you are, I'd think you'd have a wider vocabulary than 'huh'."
Serenity started brushing her hair again. "And really, it's fine with me.
>So, how long can you stay?"

>Immora was silent a few more moments. "I... I can't stay long at all. I...
came to say goodbye."
>
Serenity stood up immediately. "WHAT?!"
>
Immora sighed and turned towards the door. "Your world and mine are very
>different, and to stay here... it could... Look, I don't know how else to
put it, but it isn't possible for me to visit anymore, not for awhile."
>
"B-but... you're my friend! You can't just go!"
>
Immora looked over her shoulder at the princess, her hands clasped in a
>pleading expression. "I wish I didn't have to leave, but it's not my
decision to make. Just... *sigh* You've been a good friend to me. I won't
>forget you. We'll see each other again sometime, you'll see."

>Serenity still looked downcast. "... Al-alright... Goodbye, for now." She
ran over and hugged Immora around the waist.

>
Immora gently removed her and walked out the door.

>
"Goodbye."
>

>
Time: In a memory, about twenty years later
>Place: In a memory, the mage school, Quenhol
>

>Immora was eagerly reading a thick tome when Ka'ina walked into the study.
She called out to her, but Immora didn't seem to hear her. Immora just sat
>there, her "villager's dress" clinging to her thin form and her cat-like
eyes almost glowing as she scanned over the pages.

>
Ka'ina growled a bit, pushing her long brown hair behind her shoulder.

>Immora smirked slightly, hiding it from Ka'ina. Oh, she knew Ka'ina was
there. She was deliberately ignoring her, hoping she'd leave. Ka'ina was
>quite obviously getting irritated, and seemed ready to leave.

>Immora turned the page, a faint smile curling her lips as she found the
section she'd been searching for. She read over it carefully, committing
the words to memory. This was what she enjoyed; learning more about the
magical arts and sorcery, gaining a better understanding the nature of it
>so she could wield it with far more skill and power than anyone else could.
She knew that she was far above anyone else in her power and knowledge of
magic, and was fast developing her sorcery. It no longer hurt for her to
use sorcery, she felt only a mild bit of resistance when she used it. If
>she could just completely understand all the aspects, then she would be
unlimited in her abilities.

>
Her eyes widened as she read across the next passage: '--In order to have
full control of the abilities and be able to use them without needing to
first draw upon a source, the mage must--"

>
She screamed in horror when the book burst into flames. "Noooo!" she wailed.
>She shot a spell at it, trying to quench the flames and rebuild the book
as it had been. It wasn't working... why wasn't it...

>
She whirled around, wild with anger, and saw Ka'ina there with her hand
outstretched. She'd done it... how could she... "What the hell did you
do that for?! I should KILL you for that!!!" She sobbed at the loss, turning
back to the book, trying to reconstruct it. Damnit, it was the only copy
of it, written by the first mages that had ever come into existence. It
>was a well of knowledge, if it was destroyed forever... She flipped to the
page she'd just been reading, and her eyes narrowed and glowed in fury.
>Gone. It was all gone. The book had been created with the idea firmly in
mind that in the wrong hands, it could become dangerous, and therefore was
>created in such a way that reconstruction was impossible; if it had to be
destroyed to prevent a tragedy from happening, it would stay destroyed so
>that the information could never again be misused. And Ka'ina had destroyed

>it, all because she was too desperate for attention to consider that she'd
just destroyed a piece of history that could never be reclaimed.
>
"Do you have any idea what you've just done?!" she hissed at Ka'ina. She

>shook the ruined book at her and shouted, "This was irreplacable, and you
just destroyed it! How selfish can you get?!"
>
"You don't need what was in that book, Immora," Ka'ina retorted.
"Magic
>isn't everything, you know."

>"Damnit, Ka'ina, it's all I have!" She turned away, refusing to let
Ka'ina
see her tears, to show any weakness to her. "I don't know
what happened,
>but I know that a large part of my life was taken away from me in
that
little 'Dragana incident'." She emphasised the phrase with a
chill
>undertone. "Tell me, Ka'ina, what really happened? It's obvious
that magic
was used to wipe my memory, I want to know who did it
and why! I can tell
>that whatever was taken away was the most important thing in my
life. Now
that it's gone, I just have my magic. WHY, Ka'ina,
WHY?!?! You just ruined
>THAT, you know! I just came across the information I've been
searching for
all this time, and you destroyed it before I could
read it!"
>
She knew she wasn't rational right now. Hell, the insanity spell
had
>probably kicked in. She didn't care. She didn't have anything left
anymore,
after all. She formed a sword in her hand, whirled around
and released it,
>pinning the stunned Ka'ina to the wall by her sleeve. Before she
could free
herself, Immora was standing right by her, hissing at
her, "You just get in
>the way, you always do. I hate you. I HATE YOU!!! I don't know
what's been
done to me to make me think that I love you because
I most certainly
>DON'T, but whatever it is, it had better go away soon. I want you
out of
my life, bitch! I know this stupid insanity spell is making
me this mad,
>but I swear, I promise you, I MEAN what I am saying! I just can't
seem to
express it when the spell isn't effecting me, but I HATE
YOU! I HATE YOU!!!!"
>
Her mind whirled and she fell to her knees, her mind in a daze.
What the...
>what had just happened? She had no idea what she'd just been saying,
or
doing... She looked up and saw Ka'ina pulling a sword from the
wall that
>had pinned her sleeve. Ka'ina's eyes showed signs that the glow of
magic
had just left them...
>
"The insanity spell," she said simply, reaching a hand to help
Immora up.
>Immora felt dizzy... she looked over and saw the precious tome lying
burnt
on the table. She remembered reading it, then it burst into
flames, but...
>Why couldn't she remember what happened when the insanity spell had
kicked
in? Ka'ina must have wiped the memory... but why?

>
"You should get some rest," Ka'ina said in a shaky voice. She
turned the
>room and left quickly. Immora frowned... she had seen the tears in
her eyes
... had she said something cruel to her when the spell
kicked in? She
>sighed sadly as she looked at the tome. A waste... a terrible
waste...

>

>Time: In a memory, a few weeks later
>Place: In a memory, Immonu, Quenhol
>
>
Immora nervously knocked on the door to Lorenada's dwelling. Her students
>had all pressured her to come here seeking a cure for the insanity spell,
>and she was worried as to how Lorenada would react. Ka'ina stood there
>with her, having insisted on coming along.
>The Elf opened the door slowly, raising her eyebrow when she saw who it
>was. She had added a couple more earrings to her ear but otherwise remained
>unchanged. "Immora. It's been a long time."
>"I know, I apologize. I've been rather busy."
>Lorenada opened her mouth to speak, paused, then glared at Ka'ina.
>"I know
what you just did," she warned. "And you should know that it only affected
>my ability to discuss it, rather than actually forget it."

>Ka'ina looked very stunned, and Immora looked back and forth from her to
>Lorenada with a puzzled expression. "Ahhh... whatever. I'm here because...
>I need some help. This insanity spell--"
>"--Needs to be removed. Come on in, I'll get prepared."
>"That was quick!" Ka'ina murmured, her voice shaking slightly.

>They followed her in, sitting in the chairs the Elf indicated. "I just need
>to get a few things, then I can cast the spell. I predicted this would
>happen and already have the energy needed."
>"Oh... Thank you, thank you so much, Lorenada. I can't express how thankful
>I am for this."
>
Lorenada smiled at her as she was coming back into the room.
>"You're welcome,"
>and it really is no problem. I haven't cast a spell in so long, I needed
>this!"
>
She walked over to Immora. "Close your eyes and relax. This won't take long,
>but you'll go to sleep when it's done."
>Immora closed her eyes as Lorenada spoke, then started drifting away into
>slumber. Thank you... thank you so much...
>
>
Time: In a memory, about fifteen years later
>Place: In a memory, not definite
>

>She felt a chill go down her spine as the portal opened in front of her to
>reveal the surroundings she would soon be entering. She felt more terrified
>than she could remember ever having felt. She didn't want to have the
>discussion she'd be having, but she felt that she had to do it. She looked
>out across the dry, enormous, red-tinged caverns stretching beyond the
>portal, the pools of lava and tongues of fire dancing around almost every-
>where. Groups of bedraggled people were walking around the rocks, dirty,
>tired, appearing to be starving. Immora felt no sympathy towards them
>though; after all, they were getting what they'd deserved for their evil
>deeds they'd performed in life. It was fitting punishment for them once they

>cross the brink of death. She trembled as she entered the portal and stepped
out into the realm she'd been viewing. She silently mouthed a prayer to the
>ruler of the realm that was the opposite of this one, and shivered as she
started walking.

>
"Welcome to Hell, can I help you? My Earth name was Cassandra but I go by
>Curse now."

>Immora turned with a start at the voice she'd heard behind her. Her black
dress and cloak were already unbearably warm, but she couldn't help but feel
>cold and afraid. The woman standing behind her seemed unusually cheerful,
considering where she was. Immora then noticed her markings and extra
appendages and concluded that the woman must be a servant or perhaps a
concubine to Lucifer. The woman had the thin red diamond marking on her
forehead and long, skinny triangle on the edge of her jaw extending to her
cheeks, with sharp, gleaming horns on either side of her head, and a long,
pointed Devil's tail. She must have been a recent arrival, the length of
the horns was short, and they grew considerably with time. The woman had
dark brown skin and long, silky, red hair, with crimson eyes, thick but
well-groomed eyebrows, and features suggesting she was of African descent,
despite the hair and eye coloring.

>"I'm... looking for two people..."

>"Why don't you come have a talk with the Master?!" Curse exclaimed,
clapping her hands together. "I'm sure He can find them for you! He _is_
the ruler of this realm, after all!"

>Immora shuddered at the thought. "I don't think that would be a good idea...
I'm from the living world, and I don't exactly agree with him too well..."

>
"Oooohhhh," Curse drawled bitterly, "you're _alive_ still!... how'd you
get here then?!"

>"I'm Immora, an archmage. Work it out."

>Her red eyes widened considerably. "You... you're the archmage?!" she
sputtered. "I've heard about you from Nagera--"

>
Immora grabbed her by the front of her short dress. "What do you know about
Nagera?!"

>"Er... ow, that hurts... Well, she works alongside me, sort of my teacher,
y'know... erk, you're going to bend my tail!"

>
Immora dropped her and frantically looked around, pulling her hood up
tight around her face. "I need to speak with her, and with her husband."

>"Husband? Why, Lucifer's her husband. He's everyone's husband, that is, all
the straight women..."

>
"Her husband when they were living," Immora growled.

>
"Oh... Necros. He's burning right now, but I his time for the day will be
over soon."

>Immora stared at her blankly.

>"It's something we do here, y'know, 'go burn in Hell!' and all that

crap.
We sit in the fire awhile, and if you were reaaaally bad, you feel it

>pretty good. Some of us though, we're still too bad to notice, y'know, this
is like a big party for us, so it doesn't matter.

Necros... heh heh... he

>really hates the fire. You should hear him howl and beg for mercy! It's
very funny. He's a wimp."

>
Immora couldn't help but feel a bit cheerful at the thought of Necros

>sufferring. "Well, could you take me to Nagera then?"

>"Sure, just follow me."

>Immora kept her eyes fixed on the back of Curse's head as they walked.
She didn't particularly want to see anyone simmering in the flames. She

>felt the hair on the back of her neck rise as she heard a pitiful cry call
out to her, "Immora! You bitch, what are you doing here?!"

>
Immora couldn't help but turn to see where the voice was coming from, and

>was shocked to see Necros climbing out of the lava, sweating mightily from
the heat. Some strange creatures were trying to hold him back as he tried

>to run towards her. He was shrieking almost incoherently, trying to escape
from the creatures. "I hate you!" she could hear him saying. "It's your

>fault --- here because of you --- should have killed you! --- "

>She could only make out those words. Wearing a mask of calm while she
inwardly shivered a bit, she walked forward towards him. The woman tried

>to warn her of something, but she ignored her. "Necros. You look terrible."

>He sneered at her, throwing his head back to flip his long, stringy white
hair from his burning red eyes. They seemed almost on fire, in fact. He

>had burns in several places, and the black pants which were the only things
he wore had ashes clinging to them. "I'm going to kill you, drag you down

>here too, if I get the chance! It's all your fault... all this pain..."

>"No, it isn't," she shook her head. "You were the one who committed the
crimes and doomed yourself to this. I merely killed you."

>
"If you hadn't killed me, I would most likely still be alive, and I wouldn't

>have to face this!!!!

>"Oh well," Immora said with a shrug. "You deserve it anyways. I'm quite glad
that you ended up here though. It's a bit of a confidence boost to know that

>you and Nagera did in fact end up here, especially after what you two did
to me. You brought it on yourself. I just came to tell you that I'm an

>archmage now. I did it all by myself. I never needed you to teach me." She
then grinned at him and hissed, "And I wanted to give you _this_."

>
She held out a pendant, shaped like a stylized flame. One of the creatures

>let his left arm go so he could grab it, then it latched onto him again.
"What is this thing for?"

>
"You'll see," she said cheerfully as she walked away with Curse

to find

>Nagera.

>"What was that pendant for?" Curse asked her.

>"A bit of gloating, in a fashion," Immora commented. "I more than surpassed
him, and Nagera as well. That will give him a taste of what the power I have

>feels like, what he didn't get to have. A crushing blow to his ego, I'll
imagine." She grinned a bit as she heard his scream of rage. "That would

>probably be him," she noted. "It must have worked."

>"Are you going to give one to Nagera? Because I think it might make things
difficult on me when I'm trying to learn from her."

>
"I could care less," Immora said coldly. "Do you think I care whether you

>people here get enjoyment or not? You're obviously here because you were
an evil person, it's only fair that you suffer."

>
Curse turned towards her, her irises and pupils turning white. "That's

>amusing," she hissed. Her fingernails turned to claws. "I'm considerate
enough to help you, and you'll just leave me in the red dirt when you're

>done. Well, I think we can take care of this problem right now!"

>She jabbed her fingers in the direction of Immora's eyes, but they passed
through her. They both seemed a bit surprised at that.

Immora hadn't even

>finished calling on her magic yet.

>"*That's no way to treat a guest,*" a chilly, evil-sounding voice remarked.

>Immora shivered and fell to her knees, pure fear racing through her. She
tried to get up... she had to get out of here, if it really was him...

>
She looked up in horror at the tall form of Lucifer sitting on a huge throne

>that had appeared out of nowhere. Her mind didn't register his appearance,
only the terror she felt when she saw him. She made a mad dash for the

>portal, then stopped when she heard him call, "*Nagera's right here, if
you want to talk to her. I'm not going to do anything to you, you realize.

>None of us here can truly bother the living, even if they enter our realm
by the means you took.*"

>
"Like I'd trust you to tell the truth," she murmured, not turning around.

>She gave a small start when Nagera appeared in front of her, also having
the facial markings, long horns, and tail marking her.

Immora didn't even

>try to talk to her, she just threw the pendant at her and ran into the
portal, quickly closing it behind her when she returned to the room in her

>school she'd entered it from. She destroyed it, and lay shivering on the
floor.

>
"I heard you come back. Where did you go?" Sharra said as she walked in.

>"Are you alright? You look as if you've seen a ghost."

>"I saw the face of Lucifer... Oh God, please help me..." Immora started
crying hot tears, ignoring Sharra's attempts to calm her.

"I'm sorry, I

>don't think I'm going to be alright for awhile..."

>She lay there, still shaking, and was surprised when an object materialized
in her hand. She hadn't willed it to... maybe she had inadvertently summoned it. She looked down and almost cried with relief, clutching it tightly and placing a brief kiss on it. Her cross, a small charm on a silver chain, shaped like a rose, with a bud in the center, the top, and the sides of the arms, small leaves curling around it. She knew that it was something that had been hers when she was a normal kid back on Earth, and that it had been dear to her then, and having it here with it, knowing what it symbolized, gave her some comfort. After seeing that awful face with that evil smile, she needed all the reminders she could of the fact that there was someone as good and pure as that horror was evil and corrupted.
>As she clutched it, a chilling thought passed through her mind. Was _she_ evil? She didn't think she was... power hungry, yes; sometimes cruel; unable to control herself sometimes because of all these spells placed on her... but evil? After seeing all those terrible sights, she hoped she wasn't... if somehow she died, and ended up there... Fresh tears poured down her cheeks as she let out a wail of fear. Sharra just looked at her, puzzled, not sure what she could do to help. "I'm not entirely familiar with that person you mentioned... If I'm thinking of who I think you're thinking of, then I..." She bent down and gave Immora a comforting hug. "I'm sorry, Immora. Try to calm down. It'll be okay."
>
"It won't be okay, it won't!" Immora pushed her away and bit her lip. "I... I'm sorry, I just... I need some time to myself..."
>Sharra quietly left the room, shutting the door behind her as she left. She sadly glanced back as she started walking to her own room. Poor Immora, she thought to herself. I hope she'll be okay. Who knows what damage seeing that demon could do to her...
>
>
Time: In a memory, a few days later
>Place: Uranus
>
>Immora stumbled through the streets of Uranus, gripping any wall she came across. She still hadn't recovered from that horrible visit, and had come in search of some sort of church to go to, to try to calm herself down.
>It was so dark here... it was so unusual to her for a starry sky to hang overhead this often. There were so many people walking around, glaring at her as she passed. Did they recognize her and hate her for it?
>She gasped in shock as someone grabbed her arm and she was pulled into an alley. "What the--"
>
She was thrown back by a blow to the face, and she stumbled, trying to keep her footing. She looked over her shoulder to see several people standing there, both men and women, dressed in black from head to toe. "So, you're

>that nutty archmage, aren't you? We don't appreciate having mages around."

>Immora stood up tall, her fists clenched. These fools thought they could
fight her and win? They'd caught her by surprise before, but not again. "I

>don't appreciate being attacked by the likes of you."

>"Trying to talk tough?" one of the women taunted. A dagger was thrown at
her, glancing off her arm but doing no real damage.

"Okay, everyone, time

>to take this bitch out."

>They all rushed at her, some wielding weapons, others prepared for simple
hand-to-hand techniques. Immora stood still, letting them come at her...

>
They were all thrown back as the alley was filled with a burst of dazzling white light. Immora's hair settled around her shoulders again from being
blown up into the air, and her eyes resumed their normal color. "Don't even try_ to come near me," she murmured.

>Someone tried anyways, and was promptly impaled on a long metal pole.

>Immora was fed up. These stupid punks tried to attack her? They were going
to pay... She didn't even know what spells she was casting, and all she could hear was pain-filled screams echoing through the alley. She turned
and walked away, coldly wiping blood off her clothes.

>
She heard a crowd gather by the entrance as she started to fly away into the air. "Oh my God, don't look, son!"

>"--massacre, horrible--"

>"Who would do such a thing?!"

>Forget about this, she would just go back to Quenhol and calm down there.

>

>Time: In a memory, about five years later; Silver Millennium time period
Place: In a memory, palace, the Moon Kingdom

>

>
Immora sighed as she looked out across the surface of the Moon. It was almost time for the Senshi to be arriving. She had a bit of time to talk to
Queen Serenity before she'd have to go back to Quenhol. She frowned to herself. Back to Quenhol... to her students and Ka'ina. She wasn't looking
forward to it. Inside, her mind told her that she should return Ka'ina's feelings, but her heart told her otherwise. It didn't seem like a real love
that she felt for her. She was afraid about it, still wondering if that accident with the Dragana really happened or not, or if this was just some
sick magical spell someone put on her. She wasn't taking any chances. She talked with Ka'ina a lot, but refused to share a room. She'd let Ka'ina hug
her, maybe kiss her a little, but that was as far as she permitted. She never returned her touch anyways. She wouldn't feel right if she did. Immora
shivered and pulled her black cloak closer around her...

>
Black... the color of the darkness, of evil things... She never used to wear

>it, but somehow, the lighter colors didn't seem to fit her.
Especially after
her encounter with Sailor Pluto...
>
Immora lowered her head with a sigh. She'd gone to the Time Gate after she'd
>heard a rumor that the Guardian of Time was growing tired of her post. She
>knew from these blurred memories that they had been friends before. Immora
>was tired of teaching and pretending to have feelings for Ka'ina. She wanted
>power. Power, magic, that was all she wanted now. To have control of time...
>oh, what power she would have in her hands then! All she had to do was tell
>Pluto that she was doing it out of friendship, concern for her, and she'd
>agree!
>Wrong.
>Pluto went into a furious rage. She shouted incoherent things at Immora, and
>Immora had no clue what she meant. Things about amnesia, control, abandoning
>love; Immora didn't see what the point was, but when Pluto snapped that
>Immora didn't deserve the post, Immora's patience snapped. A burst of energy
>knocked Pluto back and cracked a part of the Gate. Immora felt her sanity
>starting to slip as it frequently did and immediately stopped, falling to
>her knees. The insanity spell... all too often it would take hold of her,
>and she could do nothing to stop it. Pluto sent her from the Gate and told
>her never to come back, calling her a being of pure evil.

>Immora had been terrified of herself after that had happened. Evil... She
>trembled. Evil... She tried to block out the memories that word stirred up,
>of her trip to 'visit' Necros and Nagera, and seeing... She shivered. To
>see the face of true evil, and to then have someone who was supposed to be
>a friend call you pure evil...
>Immora sighed and looked out across the river at all the people milling
>around. They were from all the different planets, some beautiful, others
>ugly, adorable children playing in the grass, wise old women smiling at the
>younger generation, young men teasing pretty girls...
Immora frowned in irritation and looked away. How could all those people stand to be so close
>together like that? Immora preferred being away from crowds, but somewhere
>inside, she desperately yearned for a companion, a partner, a lover...
>someone to share everything with. She didn't have that now, and she felt
>strangely as if she'd had it once and it had been ripped away from her.
>Ka'ina considered Immora her lover, but Immora didn't love her. She didn't
>enjoy her company. She wanted to shove Ka'ina away, but she couldn't for
>some reason. Something compelled her to stay, and she didn't know what it
>was, but she hated it. She looked up at the crowd once again and was surprised to see a beautiful woman with short black hair staring in shock
>at her. Immora felt a brush of recognition, then the woman was lost in the crowd again.
>
What was that feeling she'd just had... that warm rush in her

cheeks as she
>made eye contact, that flutter in her heart, that strange aching in her
heart as the woman was blocked from her sight by the crowd? Immora pulled
>her cloak tighter around herself and shivered.
>"Immora! There you are! How are you?" Immora turned to see Queen Serenity
walking towards her, smiling widely at her. "It's been so long since you've
>visited. The mages here are all hoping for the chance to talk to you."
>Immora smiled faintly at the queen. "Good to see you again. Oh, I'm doing
fine, you?"
>
"Everything's just great. My daughter recently became engaged to an Earth
>prince, Endymion. She's so happy, and I'm happy for her. I can't wait for
their wedding. Let's go inside; it's warmer and we can get something to
>eat."
>"Alright," Immora said as she followed the queen. "I am a bit hungry."
>Queen Serenity smiled. "We have plenty of food, so help yourself," she said
as they entered the dining hall, and gestured to the table filled with
>things to eat.
>They sat down and piled their plates, then the queen raised her eyes to the
archmage. "My friend, is something wrong? You seem a bit troubled."
>
"Nothing," Immora murmured. "I'm alright." She lowered her gaze to her plate
>and started to eat, trying to hide her discomfort. What was really going on?
For the past few decades, Immora had been living a strange sort of lie, and
>she wanted answers. She wanted the truth. But how could she get it? Why
was she so reluctant to tell the queen? Immora sighed softly and lifted her
>fork again.
>"I know something's wrong, Immora, and I would like to help you, but if you
find it uncomfortable to discuss, I won't force the matter."
>
"Good, because I will not talk about it." Immora stood up with an irritated
>look on her face. "I think I will be leaving now. Farewell... I'm sorry."
She quickly sent a spell at the queen to erase her memory of the encounter.
>Turning quickly towards the doors, Immora stomped from the room to the
courtyard of the palace. She telepathically contacted one of her students
>and told him to make a teleportal to bring her back to the school; for some
reason, whenever she tried to make her own, the insanity spell took hold.
>
Immora leaned against a wall and sighed, covering her face with her
>trembling hands as she tried to hold back tears. Why me? Why can't I
remember? Why can't I be in control of my life? She slid down the wall
>into a sitting position, continuing her inward musings. Who was that woman
I saw earlier, and why did she look so familiar? What's going on? She bit
>her lip as tears trickled down her cheeks. Why do I have to keep suffering?

>Immora quickly wiped away her tears as the teleportal swirled in front of
her. Stepping into it with a sigh of regret, Immora left the Silver Millennium to return to the school which was now a prison to her.
>

>Time: The present; about 2 days later
Place: The mage room, the palace
>

>
Princess Serenity yawned loudly and sat up, blinking hard as she tried to focus after waking up from a nap. After stretching, she looked over to where Akeru still hovered over Immora's prone form, then around the room to see the other senshi [minus Pluto], her mother, and the two advisors there. Luna and Artemis were looking down at Immora with puzzled looks on their faces, the senshi's faces reflecting their concern and confusion.
Queen Serenity's face was unreadable. The princess noticed after looking around a bit more that Sharra was mixing substances in a series of small clay bowls, and interesting smells, flashes of light, and puffs of colored smoke accompanied her movements. She'd changed her clothes into a pale blue and silver garb.
>
"Anything yet?" the younger Serenity called out to the others.

>
"Oh, you're awake," Mars spoke up first. "Come look for yourself."
>
Peering over her friend's shoulder, Serenity saw Immora's eyelids were fluttering slightly, as if she was in an REM state, and every once in awhile she'd flinch a bit. "What does this mean?" she asked.
"It looks as if she's just asleep now, normal sleep. Why hasn't anyone woken her up?"

>"We're taking a precaution first," Sharra told her quietly. "I'm mixing up a drink that we will give her as soon as she wakes up. It's in case for some reason she snaps and the insanity spell clicks in. Lorenada supposedly removed it, but I've noticed that her spell wasn't as effective as she'd hoped... Akeru, still can't tell what she's thinking?"

>Akeru shook her head, clutching the gem she wore around her neck. "I don't understand it, I haven't felt anything since... This happened when she was in the coma, but I could sense again when she woke up... and now... I'm sorry, I'm just so used to it that when it's gone..."

>
"Perfectly understandable. Now... to finish this.."
>
When Sharra poured everything from all but one of the bowls into a larger one, then mixed it while pouring the last one in, Serenity heard a peculiar sound; she could hear it in her mind, not with her ears, and it sounded strangely like flocks of tiny birds chittering on top of the crystalline sound of the rims of wine glasses being rubbed. Sharra walked over to where everyone was gathered, the cats and the senshi automatically moving back;
the queen was already back far enough. "Are you ready?"

Sharra asked Akeru.

>
Akeru nodded. "Alright; I wake her up and you give her that immediately,

>right?"

>"That's right."

>Akeru nodded again, then gently shook Immora's shoulders. Immora groaned
and opened her eyes, sitting up immediately. Sharra then grabbed her

>shoulder and pressed the bowl to the archmage's lips. Immora instinctively
drank it down; she'd been in enough situations where she'd had to take

>various mixtures that it didn't faze her anymore. Immora closed her eyes
after swallowing it, leaning back in Akeru's arms as if dizzy. "Give it

>a few seconds," Sharra whispered.

>After several awkwardly long moments, Immora's eyes opened again. At first,
she looked around as if she didn't recognize anything, then her eyes

>connected with Akeru's and she broke into a grin, throwing her arms around
Akeru's neck. "Oh, Akeru! I can't believe... I saw... I..."

>
"shhh... just relax. Once you've woken up more, I'll feel everything--"

>
Immora buried her face against Akeru's shoulder and tears of happiness

>flowed freely from her eyes. "I saw everything, Akeru! I saw everything...
I saw me as a little girl, and when I first became a mage... and when..."

>Immora paled slightly then hugged her tighter. "I'm just so happy..."

>"So it worked?!" Sharra asked with a gasp.

>Immora grinned at her. "It worked better than we ever could have predicted
it to have."

>
Sharra smiled at her. "Well then, I'm glad I didn't make a mistake after

>all."

>Immora gave her a pretend reprimanding look. "I don't know, I might have to
start training you in basic morals all over again."

>
Sharra groaned. "Great... trying to run a whole planet in a sane manner

>while talking philosophy with _you_?... Quenhol is surely doomed."

>Most of the senshi couldn't help but giggle.

>"Are you sure everything you saw was real?" Akeru asked her lover in worried
tones. "I mean, you've been given false memories before, are you c-"

>
Immora pressed her finger to her lips with a smile. "I can honestly say

>that I remember it all..." she whispered something faintly and Akeru's eyes
widened.

>
"You do!" Akeru gasped. "You have to, if you remember _that_!"

>
Immora laughed and combed her fingers through Akeru's hair. "I can't believe

>it; I actually can see everything now... there's no doubts about my past
or uncertainties... maybe now I can start being more normal, wouldn't you

>say?"

>Akeru teased her, "Oh, so you call being an immortal archmage and

my
lover _normal_? Sharra, was that an alchoholic drink you gave her?"

>
Sharra just chuckled and didn't answer.

>
The senshi came forward to hug and congratulate Immora. Uranus was just

>leaning over to embrace her when her eyes widened with shock.

"Y-your eyes!"
she gasped out, unable to say more.

>
Akeru looked at Immora in surprise as well. "My God... they're..."

>
A mirror appeared in Immora's hands and she raised an eyebrow in amusement.

>"Round pupils..." she murmured. She looked at her reflection several more
moments. "And they aren't gone already... I never did understand why they

>sometimes shifted... I hope they stay normal, I never liked looking like
a freak."

>
"Truly an amazing thing, isn't it?" a bitter voice said out of nowhere.

>
Everyone looked around, but couldn't find the source of the voice. "It

>sounded familiar," Immora commented, and Sharra and Akeru nodded their
agreement. "Oh well..."

>
"Oh! I can sense you again!" Akeru exclaimed excitedly. She quickly moved

>to hug Immora tightly again, both squealing with delight.

>"What's going on?" Serenity asked in a confused voice.

>Sharra opened her mouth to speak, paused, then started again, "Well, they
... they pretty much have each other's souls in a necklace around their

>necks."

>"HUH?!"

>"Seriously, some elements helped them go about it, so with those necklaces,
they can feel every emotion the other experiences, share thoughts, always

>be together. They have each other's life. When Immora was under Ka'ina's
spell, Ka'ina had her necklace removed and placed in a safe somewhere, but

>Immora retrieved it when she broke the spell. They're, of course, very
happy to have them back again."

>
"That's... um... actually, it sounds wonderful... confusing though."

>
"Magic can be like that."

>
Akeru helped Immora to her feet, and everyone left the room. Akeru and

>Immora went into their bedroom, while the Senshi went outside and the Moon
Queen took her advisors to her throne room, followed by the Quenholtian

>Queen.

>Akeru lay down on the bed while Immora was drawing the curtains shut. "I
haven't gotten any real rest the past forty years," Akeru groaned. "First,

>Ka'ina brainwashes you and sends me here, then you fell into that eight-
month coma, and then you were stuck in that memory thing... I think I'll

>sleep all day. I feel so overwhelmed right now by all this... hey, stop
mocking me. I know what you're thinking!"

>
Immora chuckled as she came over beside the bed. She pulled the covers

>over Akeru, kissed her lips gently, then sat down on the bed next to

her, stroking her hair. Akeru closed her eyes and sighed deeply.
"I love you,"
>she whispered.
>"I love you," Immora whispered back.
>Akeru fell asleep shortly after that, Immora smiling wistfully at her sleeping form.

>

>
Time: Several minutes later
>Place: Outside of the palace

>

>The Senshi had gone outside the palace and were following Neptune to the lake where Pluto had revealed their memories to them. At first, they weren't certain of whether they wanted to do this or not, but after a bit of consideration, they decided it was the best course of action. They'd talked about it ever since Pluto left, and had argued over it while Immora was in her short coma, and finally agreed that this would be a good thing to do.

>They were going to try to contact Pluto.

>While the Senshi had abilities in telepathy, none of them were strong enough on their own to reach the Time Guardian's realm. They realized, however, that they could combine their strength and maybe then they would reach her.

>
"You sure this will work?" Venus asked the others as they started closing their eyes.

>"Positive," Mercury replied. "At least, positive we will be able to contact her. I don't think there's any way for us to be certain if she'll actually consider what we ask or not."

>"Why don't we all be quiet now and worry about contacting her?" Uranus said drily.

>
They all silenced themselves and closed their eyes tightly, the symbols on their foreheads glowing as they searched with their minds for Pluto.

>

>Pluto looked up from the book she was reading when she sensed a call--a group of minds sending out to her telepathically. She irritably searched with her own mind to identify them and wasn't surprised to discover that it was her fellow Senshi. 'What do you want?!" she growled with her mind.

>
'Setsuna, why don't you come back?' Neptune pleaded. 'We miss you; we want to talk.'

>'We're talking right now.'

>'But that's not what type of talking we mean,' Jupiter said. 'We want to see you and talk to you face to face. We had a misunderstanding, that's all.'

>'How could any of you understand what I'm going through?' Pluto snapped.
'You all have abilities far different from mine; you have no idea what responsibilities are placed on me.'

>'I do,' Saturn replied quietly. 'Stop feeling sorry for yourself, Pluto. It could be worse for you. You have lots of power and

responsibility, but your
>power isn't that hard to control, is it? You have duties, but you perform
them well. You don't have to constantly keep yourself in check for the sake
of everyone.'

>'And you do, I know,' Pluto remarked coldly. 'Maybe the price of your
failure would be death for us all, but the price of my failure would be
>pain for everyone, without the release death brings.'

>'Oh, stop being so morbid,' Mars told her. 'Come here. We're still
your friends, Pluto, we weren't thinking when we were cruel to you.'
>
'Mars is right,' Serenity added. 'You were helping us and we
didn't even
>realize that what you were doing was good for us, not bad.'

>'You gave them something special,' Neo-Moon said. 'You gave them the

knowledge they needed to make this time a good one. Maybe you
can't repair
>it, but what if things are supposed to be this way? Stop worrying
about
duty and try to enjoy yourself.'
>
'Yeah, Setsuna,' Venus threw in. 'You know what they say, happy
times come
to lazy people.'

>'I think you mean, good things come to those who wait,' Uranus
corrected
her.
>
'Funny, I've been alive who knows how many millennia now. I'm
still
>waiting.'

>"Well, it's time you stopped then," a voice came to Pluto from next
to her.
Pluto broke off the mental contact and looked with
surprise to see Immora
>standing there.

>"What are you doing here?!" Pluto gasped.

>"Akeru went to sleep and I sensed what was happening," the archmage
replied.
"I want to help."
>
"Everyone wants to help, but what can any of you do that would
help me?"
>
Immora chuckled as she leaned against the Gate. "I tried to
help you when
>I was still under Ka'ina's influence, remember? I offered to take
your
duties over. I'm not making that same offer, but I can give
you something
>no one else probably can."

>Pluto grimaced inwardly. That didn't sound right out of context...
"What is
that?"
>
"What do you want?"
>
Pluto blinked rapidly in surprise. "WHAT?!"
>
"What do you want? Simple enough question, I would think. Just
tell me what
>you want and I can make it happen with my magic, if need be with the
help
of some of my students. So what is it?"
>
Pluto narrowed her eyes and lowered her head. How could Immora
expect her
>to answer that? And how could this woman actually give her what
she
wished for above anything else?...
>
"I want... I want to be rid of this duty. I hate it. I don't
want it and
>I don't want to have this stupid feeling in me that makes me want to
keep
doing it. I want to be like the other Senshi, just having a

normal life

>except for the fact that we have to fight sometimes. I don't want to deal
>with this anymore."

>
Immora sighed and tilted her head upwards, raising her now-normal eyes

>heavenward. "Pluto... I can get rid of that feeling within you... but do
>you realize the true nature of your duties? Do you?"

>
"Of course I do, I watch over the Gate of Time and over everything that

>happens, and make sure everything happens the right way and fix it if it
>doesn't."

>
"No."

>
Pluto stood up abruptly, her chair falling over. "WHAT?! Are you MAD

>again?!"

>Immora turned her head away and said softly, "You misunderstood when you
>were told about your duties. The man simply said you were to watch over the

>Gate. He never told you that you had to do all those other things. All you
>are obliged to do is to make sure the Gate is in running order and that

>nothing disturbs it, and you don't even need to be in this realm to do that.
You assumed that those other tasks were part of your duties when they

>really aren't."

>Pluto trembled and clutched her Time Key in her hands. "...You're lying. You
>have to be. You can't be serious."

>
"I am dead serious," Immora said, her eyes flashing as she met Pluto's

>horrified gaze. "Pluto, I don't know how I came across this knowledge, but
>I know it's true. You've been performing a duty you don't need to do. Time

>will take care of itself, you just have to make sure the Gate is alright.
It's that simple."

>
"You're... lying..."

>
"No, she's quite right," another voice came. Pluto turned to see Akeru was

>now standing there, wearing rings on all her fingers. Immora seemed as
>shocked as Pluto to see her there. "Time is an element, Setsuna, and I can

>talk to it and alter it just like you can, except you're better at it and
>more powerful in your abilities. It's told me before that what you are doing

>is unnecessary and maybe even more harmful than leaving time alone would be.
It doesn't need you to watch over it, it will tend to itself. I've wanted to

>tell you before, but I found this out just after I was sent here by Ka'ina
and I couldn't contact anyone. Pluto, you don't have to do these things,

>and if you don't want to watch the Gate, you don't have to do that either,
someone else can."

>
Pluto shook all over. "You two... just come in here... and try to tell me

>I've been wasting my life all this time?"

>"I'm sorry, Pluto, but it's the truth."

>Pluto started trembling hard. "... I want proof."

>"What do you mean?"

>"Proof. I want _proof_. You can't expect me to believe this without a sign
of some sort that would indicate it's true. If this _is_

true, you should

>be able to prove it."

>"Well, if that's what you really want," Akeru murmured. She raised one of
her hands to about eye-level, concentrating on the near-black ring on her

>right pinky. Her eyes and the ring glowed a purplish black hue, and an aura
of the same color formed around her. Pluto let out a gasp as something

>spoke to her mind, but not with words, rather in sensations, fleeting
images, she couldn't describe how it spoke to her. She knew it to be time

>though, it was definitely time speaking to her... she questioned it, argued
with it, and finally gave it her meek agreement.

>
"A-Are you finished?" Akeru gasped when Pluto sat down with a troubled look

>on her face. "'Cuz it's not easy to do this..."

>"Y-Yes..."

>The glow subsided and Akeru shook her head a bit as if trying to clear it.
"Ugh... I hate doing that... making an element talk to someone... They're

>so stubborn sometim--" She stopped when Immora looked over at her with an
expression that clearly but gently told her to be quiet for now.

>
Immora slowly approached Pluto, a concerned look on her face. Pluto sat in

>her righted chair, legs crossed, her pinky pushed between her teeth in a
thoughtful expression, while her deep red eyes were liquidy with held back

>tears. Her fuku had melted away into a long black evening gown, her hair
let down, spilling about her shoulders and out the back of her chair, pieces

>falling across her face to hide it. "Do you... want to talk about it?"
Immora asked quietly.

>
"I... I..." Pluto slowly lowered her head. "I don't know... I think I'll

>go back to the palace now... but... How can this be? To have gone so
long..."

>
"Shhh... I understand what you're feeling right now, in a way. Don't say

>any more that you can bear to say. We're going to go ahead and leave, you
just come on your own, alright?"

>
Pluto nodded, and Immora turned to Akeru, taking her hand as they teleported

>away. Pluto buried her face in her hands, tears spilling down her cheeks
as her shoulders shook from her sobs. Her long hair fell across her face,

>masking it, hiding her from... what? There was no one here to see her, after
all.

>
"So, it took you this long to finally realize what a silly game your life

>has been?"

>Pluto looked up with a bitter look in her eyes at the man standing there.
That man... that horrible man that had put her in this position. "I hope

>you're happy," she sneered, standing up and drawing herself up to her full
height. "It's your fault, you know. Why don't you just leave? I have nothing

>to say to you."

>The man shrugged. "I don't feel like leaving." He looked around a bit. "Nice
decor... like the mirrors, but don't you think the fog is a bit overdone?"

>
He reeled backwards, falling to the floor when Pluto's staff connected with

>a loud "crack!" against his jaw. She then drew back her foot and kicked him
hard between the legs. He let out a loud yelp and writhed on the ground,

>moaning and gasping.

>"Well, _that_ was certainly liberating!" she chuckled, turning away as she
teleported. But what would she do now, now that she was free? What _could_

>she do? Her life had been centered around her "duties", and now?

>She chuckled a bit. Why not have fun then? What was wrong with that, after
all. She deserved a little fun for once.

>
"Oh, would you mind doing a little housekeeping once you can walk?" she

>called over her shoulder. "You're right about the fog you know, so why
don't you take care of it?" She laughed loudly and teleported away.

>

>
Time: Roughly several minutes after the end of the last part

>Place: The palace grounds, the Moon Kingdom

>

>"I wonder what happened to make her break off so suddenly?" Mars murmured.
"I didn't sense anything wrong, she just broke off the contact out of

>nowhere." She ran her hand through her long red hair and sighed.

>"Perhaps someone decided to drop in on her?" Saturn offered in a soft voice.

>Uranus shook her head. "I think Setsuna just got fed up and broke off. The
last thing she said was that she was still waiting, and then she was gone.

>I think she took it badly."

>"Who knows with Setsuna though," Neptune mused, taking Uranus's hand. "We'll
just have to try again later."

>
They all reversed their transformations and stood there in their dresses.

>"Hey, it's starting to get dark," Jupiter commented as she looked up at
the sky. She chuckled a bit as she added, "I don't think I'm ever going to

>get used to having a Dark and a Sun cycle."

>"Really? I still think it's weird to look up at the sky and not see stars,"
Uranus said. "You can see them all the time on Uranus. Some people hate it;

>reminds them that we're not the only ones out there. I like it though."

>"Speaking of your home planet, when's your next trip back?" Mercury asked
her.

>
"I've still got several days. Things are going alright though, so this trip

>will only be for a week. I heard a rumor going around about you, Mercury.
People are saying you've been considering taking back the throne. Is that

>true?"

>Mercury stiffened a bit, then nodded. "I think that I can handle it now,
and since there are no current threats here, the Senshi

aren't needed.

>Kunzite is going to help me out with some things, and that'll be a big
relief. Mercury needs alot of help right now..."

>
"Aren't all the Generals studying magic now?"

>
"Yes, and he's the best so far, by a lot."

>
"Nephrite's not far behind!" Jupiter quickly cut in. "He would be ahead if

>Kunzite wasn't taking extra courses."

>Some of them giggled at Jupiter's immediate defense of her husband.

>"Sorry," Mercury said, "I wasn't trying to make the others look bad."

>"Good," Mars and Venus sniffed in unison, flipping their hair over their
shoulders. They both looked at each other and laughed and their actions.

>
"Oh brother," Usagi murmured, pressing her hand to her forehead. "It used

>to be mama and Minako, now Rei and Minako. What next?"

>"Maybe I will become the famous Sailor V again," Minako chuckled, wiggling
her eyebrows. "After all, the crystal globes' programming doesn't compare

>to television. We need something exciting in the lineup."

>"Uh oh!"

>The Senshi laughed and walked back into the palace.

>

>"[Do you have everything you need]?" a woman murmured to the other standing
near her. They were hiding out in a tunnel deep inside the palace. The

>tunnel was kept secret to be used as an escape route in wartime. It had
taken quite a large dose of some strange liquids the first woman kept with

>her as well as a spell to draw out the information. This section of the
tunnel was set next to a meeting room, which was currently being used. They

>kept their voices low to avoid being discovered, and the fact that they
were speaking in another language kept their plans from being found out if

>that should somehow happen.

>"[This one needs a bit of sharpening,]" the second said, holding up a
dagger, "[but otherwise, yes.]"

>
"[Good. Remember, make sure you wait for the right moment.]"

>
"[Listen, mage, I'm the head of the Assassins' Guild; I know how to pull

>these off.]"

>"[That's funny, I seem to remember a rather poor attempt on Sharra at her
coronation. You screwed up that one and got your guild in prison. You're

>lucky you got out.]"

>"[That was centuries ago!]" the assassin hissed. "[And it would have worked
out if that bitch Sailor Pluto hadn't gotten in my way, and if Akeru hadn't

>killed my friend that had the knife to Sharra's throat!]"

>"[Well, this place is crawling with Senshi, so you better have gotten over
your lack of skill around them. I'll take care of Akeru.]"

>
"[Look, you do what you came here to do, and I'll do what I came here to

>do. I don't want you interfering, got it? I'm only cooperating with you
because of our mutual hatred for that Elf-eyed bitch Akeru.]"

>
"[You really do show that extra blood--]"

>
The assassin drew another knife and held it near the mage's throat. "[Don't

>_ever_ speak of my background, got it?!]"

>The mage chuckled, her eyes flashing silver, green, and blue. "[It's not
that bad being what you are, is it? No one would ever know by looking at

>you... except for those teeth and nails of course.]"

>The assassin growled, the objects in question--sharp fangs on the sides of
the front four teeth on her top and bottom jaw and long, claw-like nails--

>bared at the mage. "[Look, just shut your mouth and let me prepare, got
it?]"

>
"[Hmmm, you must have _some_ special abilities as a result of the blood;

>what are they? You've never mentioned them.]"

>The assassin narrowed her eyes and peered through a crack in the walls of
the tunnel they were hiding out in. "[A bit of telepathy and telekinesis,

>and heightened senses.]"

>"[And by heightened...?]"

>"[Look through the crack.]"

>The mage sighed and looked out.

>"[Do you see the man standing on the left fringes of the crowd, with a
snowy white cloak, grey uniform, long white hair, a gem holding each side

>of his cloak in place on his shoulders, ice blue eyes, sharp jawline?]"

>The mage squinted a bit, looking hard out the crack. "[I think I see him...
How in the world could you pick out all those details?]"

>
"[Really sharp eyes. He's wearing a cologne that reminds me of the Junoa

>trees back home, and he's talking about magic with the blond man next to
him that's dressed in the same uniform but without the cloak. The blond

>is wearing a similar cologne, but sharper.]"

>The mage whistled and backed away from the crack. "[Well then, that boosts
my confidence in you considerably. That's amazing how you can tell all these

>things about people standing so far away.]"

>The assassin smirked and then cocked her head to the side. "[They mentioned
Immora... wanting to talk to her about... eh? Pfft... a simple fire spell,

>nothing interesting.]"

>The mage snorted and brushed her brown hair out of her face. "[Well, ready
to go?]"

>
"[Do I look sufficiently Human?]" The assassin adjusted her red hair to

>cover her ears, smoothing it down from its normal style.

>The mage wrinkled her nose. "[You're still green,]" she criticized her. She
thought for a moment, then murmured a spell that made the assassin's skin

>appear a normal hue to anyone who didn't know that it really wasn't that
color, then briefly explained what she had done. "[Don't you feel at all

>squeamish at this? You're going to kill your father's sister, after

all.] "

> "[No... why, should I?]" "

> The mage stared at her in mute shock for a moment, then murmured,
" [You
really _are_ a cold blooded killer.]"
>
" [Of course. All good assassins know that they have to ignore
familial,
>friendly, and romantic ties if they want to get the job done.]" "

> "[Riiight... Well, good hunting, E'melok.]" "

> The assassin grinned. "[And to you, Ka'ina.]" "

>*****
END REMEMBRANCE ~~~ NEXT: DESTRUCTION

5. Destruction

~~SILVERMOON~~

> Destruction
 Eleven - ? (Incomplete compilation)
> a Bishoujo Senshi Sailormoon fanfiction by Immora

> _____

>Please see the author's notes in Resurrection for all copyright

information.

>
Though this compilation is incomplete, part eleven is finished.

>
I apologize for the awful line-wrapping.

>

>

> ELEVEN

> _____

>

>Time: A few days after the last segment
Place: A hidden tunnel
inside the palace, the Moon Kingdom

>

>
E'melok stood by a wall in the tunnel, waiting with a bitter
look on her

>face. Ka'ina had ordered her to wait a few days for two people to
arrive
that would assist her, also telling her she shouldn't
proceed too quickly.

>E'melok had been gravely insulted by the comment; she was perfectly
capable
of killing someone on her own and knew how to time it
right. Ka'ina had

>said it was merely a precaution in case forces outside of E'melok's
control
prevented her from performing the job, and these people
would assist her

>only in finding Sharra, not in the actual killing. She said E'melok
should
wait to make sure she was prepared. E'melok still had a
feeling Ka'ina

>didn't think she was capable of handling these Senshi. They had such
a
strange name. It sounded like a flower she'd heard of.

>
E'melok pulled a long, polished, hollowed-out twig from a pocket
on the

>inside area of her coat, filled it with a mixture of different
ground up
materials--flower petals, leaves, herbs, spices, and
dried fruit--lit one

>end of the mixture with a small lighter, then stoppered that end
with a
small piece of metal to keep the smoldering mixture from

spilling out.

>Taking the opposite end between her lips, she sucked in the flavored air
it gave off and a bit of the mix, leaning back in her chair.

>
She had read once that the Earth Humans had a device that seemed like a

>ridiculous parody off of the one she sucked on. They called it a "cigarette",
and it seemed to simply be a pile of poison wrapped in paper, which they lit,

>sucked on in a similar manner, and slowly killed or at least diseased them-
selves with it while wasting a great deal of money in the process. E'melok

>thought it was absurd; the mixtures taken in through the elettha, the twig
which she held between her slender fingers, were actually quite healthy;

>the smell soothing, the taste pleasing, and the only thing that could harm
you would be if you accidentally burnt yourself on one of the smoldering

>pieces. E'melok kept it with her at all times--it helped to keep a cool head
in the business she was in--and a mixture she'd made herself. The elettha

>had been given to her by a client, the twig it was made from taken from the
tree he lived in, and he'd polished and sanded it smooth himself. It was a

>thank you for taking care of his irritating mother-in-law.

>It occurred to her that she hadn't eaten since yesterday, when Ka'ina had
brought her a bit of fruit. She had trained herself to ignore hunger since

>her profession often required her to spend weeks at a time far from
civilization with no supplies to burden her. Though she sometimes found

>her strength compromised, it actually sharpened her concentration. A
stomach that was too full would slow your movements, anyways. She ate

>enough to survive, nothing more. Drinking was another matter. She always
kept a container of water tucked away in her coat.

>
E'melok's dark green eyes narrowed as she heard someone enter the tunnel.

>No, not someone, she could make out the sound of two pairs of feet now. One
was walking a bit too heavily, probably a Human. The other barely touched

>the ground, and sounded more careful. Was she just picking up on a similar
sound elsewhere, or did she hear the faint rustle of--no... a Dragana

>wouldn't be here...

>She swore inwardly, putting out the elettha and tucking it away, as she
stood up with her dagger in hand and her eyes narrowed. She could make out

>their shapes clearly now. The Human-sounding footsteps revealed themselves
to belong to a very peculiar woman. E'melok recognized the markings as

>being Demonic; this woman was apparently risen from Hell, but she didn't
have the horns and tail. E'melok wondered what had happened to them. She

>was dark-skinned and had pure red hair and eyes. She wore a pale orange
dress, the sides slit to bare her legs, with short sleeves, and the front

>a low V. A thick border of dark red-orange lined the sleeves, the V, and
the hem of the skirt. A wide golden corset was tied around

her torso,
>covering from the bottom of her breasts to her waistline. A band of gold
>was around her neck, with a circular red gem dangling from a chain attached
>to it, the color matched the tall leather boots that reached to midthigh.
She carried in one hand a long metal fighting staff, and in the other a
>similar staff that was topped with a large blade. E'melok suspected the
Demoness had other abilities that would back up the weapons she carried,
>probably fire and some sort of evil charms.
>It took merely the sight of the Dragana to chill E'melok's mixed blood.
She wasn't like the typical women classified as Dragana--born of a dragon
>and a female of another species--but appeared as if born of a "true
Dragana" and another dragon. She had the typical hair and skin colorings;
>her chocolate-colored hair closely cropped with chin-length black bangs
and a pale shade of yellow-green for her skin. Her eyes were blood red,
>her eyebrows slanted with the area between them and her eyelashes being a
dark color that was nearly black. She had sharp, chiseled, but beautiful
>features, despite an eerie Dragonnish look she had. Her dark green lips
parted to reveal her sharp teeth and long fangs, and a long, slender,
>forked tongue, like the one's dragons and snakes shared. Her skin was
almost leathery, slightly moist, similar to the texture of scales except
>for the fact that it was all one piece instead of smaller overlapping
sections. Her muscles were tight and defined, and were especially strong
>in her back to support her enormous wings. While other Dragana had a wing-
span approximately twice their height, and the top of their wings being a
>couple feet over their head with the bottom point around their thighs,
hers towered over her head and swept against the ground, and she kept
>them closed tightly to keep from brushing them against the walls due to
the wingspan that would probably be double that of the others. Her fingers
>and toes didn't quite have nails; instead, the skin hardened at the tips
to stretch into long, sharp claws. Extending from each elbow was a long
>spike; when her arm was fully extended, it lay almost flat against her
arm, reaching up near her shoulder, but when she bent her elbow fully,
>it pointed straight out. Her only clothing items were hip-hugging, dark
brown leather shorts, and a halter top made of the same material. With
>her claws, elbow spikes, and her various fire, ice, and lightning-related
abilities, she didn't need weapons. In fact, her fire abilities were
>creating the ball of light hovering around them to let everyone see.
>E'melok greeted them in the Earth language rather coldly, "Hello. Are you
the people Ka'ina was sending to me?"
The Demoness nodded and introduced herself, "My name's Curse. I was told
>you're E'melok. I'm formerly of Earth, then Hell, then sent to

Quenhol for
some odd reason I don't understand. I'll warn you now, I don't speak the
>Quenholtian tongue."
>"Good thing I speak both then. And our Dragana friend would be--?"
>"Dageena," the Dragana said simply.
>"She doesn't like speaking the Earth tongue," Curse commented. "I don't
know why."
>
E'melok raised an eyebrow. "It's perfectly understandable... The Earth tongue is annoying for Quenholtians to speak. It has such strange sounds."
>Dageena nodded knowingly, then turned to Curse. "I have a translation
crystal I do not use, would you like it?"
>
Curse nodded and took the necklace from Dageena when she handed it to her.
>"Thank you... hey, where'd it come from?! You don't exactly have a lot of
places you could hide it."
>
Dageena just smirked. "Everyone has their secrets. Don't use it too much;
>the magic is almost worn out. I have no use for it, so you can keep it."
>"How come you refused to talk in the Earth tongue for any length of time
when we spoke earlier? It seemed like you _couldn't_ speak it."
>
"I speak many languages from Earth, more than just the common one. We
>Dragana have greatly accelerated thinking due to our Dragon background,
myself in particular, since Dragons have incredibly fast thought processes.
>It makes learning languages quite simplistic."
>"Um... Okaaaay... Say, E'melok, I thought you had Elven blood in you; why's
your skin peachy then?"
>
"Ah... Ka'ina's spell... can't exactly walk into this ball looking green."
>
Dageena smirked a bit and murmured, "Your ears are _Human_ though, and I
>know you have Elven ears. I don't believe that's part of a spell... Dragana
can sense magic and repel it."
>
E'melok narrowed her eyes at Dageena. "... I don't know what you're talking
>about..."
>"So E'melok, what's the plan?" Curse asked, cutting in.

>E'melok peered through the crack in the tunnel wall. "Those Generals...
they could make things difficult. Curse, I want you to make a distraction
>to get them out of the room. I don't care what it is, or what condition
they are in when you're done, just keep them busy until I give you the
>all clear, okay?"
>"Gotcha."
>"Dageena, stay hidden, got it? These people have no clue as to what things
on Quenhol are like, and a lot don't even know it exists. There are no
>creatures like the Dragana here, so they'll freak if they see you. I want
you to come out though, when I move to kill Sharra. Create a fuss so people
>will be too busy worrying about you to worry about me."

>Dageena nodded, flicking her tongue as she grinned. "This will be fun."
>She turned so she was facing the wall and opened her wings to their full
>span, the long claws tipping them flashing a bit in the light she'd created
>for them. "Kill or injure?"
>
>"I don't care. Go wild."
>
>Dageena chuckled wickedly.
>
>"Shall we be going?" Curse asked.
>
>"Alright. Let's head out."
>
>
>"No, no, no, Nephrite, you do it like this," Jadeite said, forming a
>small fireball in his hands.
>"My way works just fine," Nephrite snorted, "it's just slower but the
>fireball is larger and hotter in the end."
>
>"Oh, will you two just let it rest?" Kunzite groaned. "It's just magic,
>no need to get all worked up."
>"Let them argue it out," Zoisite murmured to him. "When they're not
>paying attention, we'll beat the crap out of them."
>
>They both laughed, Nephrite and Jadeite turning to look at them irritably.
>"What's so funny?"
>"Ahhh... nothing..."
>The Generals looked out across the dance floor. "Where is everyone
>anyways?" Jadeite asked. "Does it really take that long to get ready
>for a ball?"
>"Of course," Zoisite groaned. "Try on every dress they own, do their make-up, jewelry, hair, then redo it, then change at the last minute--"
>
>"Speaking from experience?" Kunzite teased, letting out a loud "umph!"
>as Zoisite elbowed him hard in the stomach.
>"Excuse me, I do NOT dress up like a woman!"
>"I'd imagine that would be a rather amusing sight," Nephrite commented.
>"Oh yes, after all, he does have such pretty hair!" Jadeite laughed.
>">
>"Such lovely features, too! So feminine!" Nephrite added.
>
>"I'm going to kill all of you," Zoisite said between clenched teeth.
>">
>"Suuuure you are," Jadeite teased.
>"I think I see Makoto over there," Nephrite interrupted. "Goodbye, I'm
>off to have a more mature conversation."
>
>"'I'm off to have a more mature conversation'," Zoisite mimicked after
>the brunette had left. "Yeah, with Jupiter... 'mature' alright..."
>">
>"Aww, c'mon, she's pretty smart, compared to some of the others..."
>Jadeite said. "Such as... Minako?"
>
>"Oh man," Zoisite groaned.
>
>"Don't tell me you agree!"
>">
>Zoisite colored very faintly. "Er... well, she's nice and she's pretty,
>but she's..."
>">Not the brightest star in the sky?" Kunzite threw in.

>"Exactly."
>"Yeah, and you've got that brain Ami," Jadeite remarked to Kunzite. "The
complete opposite of Minako as far as smarts go... But quite timid."
>
"What about Rei, hmm? Temper, temper..."
>
Jadeite rolled his eyes. "Rei does _not_ have a temper, you just don't
have a tolerance for her."
>"She really does have a temper," Zoisite whispered to Kunzite, "his is
just much like hers that he doesn't think anything of it!"

>
They both laughed while Jadeite demanded to know what was so funny,
getting only more laughter as a reply. They quickly stopped when Mars
walked up, her arms crossed tightly over her chest.
"Jadeite, where have
you been?"
>"Right here, where have you been?"
>Mars dragged him off by the arm while the remaining Generals waved

goodbye to Jadeite.
>
"Poor Jadeite, he's helpless against her," Zoisite commented.

>
"Sure is... uh oh, here comes Minako! Get ready or you're going to get
dragged away too."
>"Aww... Better get going before she gets really mad... bye,
Kunzite."
>"Bye, Zoisite."
>Zoisite trudged over to Venus, and emitted a startled yelp as she grabbed
his arm and dragged him onto the dance floor. Kunzite chuckled to himself
as he watched their antics.
>"Kunzite, sorry about that, I got lost in some computer read-outs and had
to rush to get ready."
>
Kunzite turned to see Mercury standing behind him. "Oh, hello. Sorry,
>didn't hear you walk up. And it's alright, I appreciate intelligence."
>"I'm going to get something to eat, care to join me?"

>"Alright." Kunzite took her arm and walked over to the food tables. As
he was fixing a plate, he noticed Pluto standing in the corner, smiling
faintly. He smiled to her and waved. It was good to see her smiling for
once. She was always so serious.
>
He noticed Zoisite looking a bit bored as Venus talked to him. Kunzite
smiled sadly and glanced at Mercury. She just winked at him and headed
for a table.
>
As he sat down, he felt a strange chill in his neck. He glanced around,
>wondering what would have triggered his senses like that. He usually got
"feelings" when something bad was going to happen.

>
Pluto glanced over at Kunzite and Mercury one more time, then walked out
to where everyone was dancing. She tapped someone on the shoulder,
grinned, and asked to cut in. He quickly accepted, leaving a fuming
woman looking after them.

>"Pluto's actually dancing and enjoying herself," Mars commented to
>
Jadeite. "That's a good sign."
>
"I don't know... I mean, it's very good," Jadeite said, "but I
have a
>bad feeling, I don't know why..."

>"You too?" she whispered. "I have doubts about things as well. I
keep
seeing... I can't explain the vision, but it really worries
me."
>
She felt a sharp twinge, and quickly glanced to the entrance.
Just a
>woman entering the room. She was quite remarkable, though. Her hair
was
a bright shade of red, voluminous, the back falling only to
the back of
>her neck, while the front pieces fell far past her chin. Her
eyebrows and
her dark green eyes seemed to have a bit of a slant
to them. She was quite
>tall and thin, but very toned. She was paler than anyone Mars had
seen,
save for Saturn. Her clothes were a bit unusual; a dark
green dress, the
>top circling her neck, then leaving her shoulders bare like a halter
top,
tight all the way to her ankles, her feet hidden, plus tall
gloves that
>stopped short of her biceps. Mars felt a bit uneasy about the
woman.

>"Well... care to dance?" he asked.

>"Sure," she said, forcing a smile. Her senses were seldom
misleading.
There was something wrong, and she knew it. "Jadeite,
tell me... see
>the woman over there? In the green dress, red hair, very pale?"

>He looked over there. "Hmmm... unusual... I wonder where she's
from.
Not Mars or Pluto, with that skin. Her features are strange,
though,
>not Terran..."

>"What do you sense when you look at her?"

>"Well, I still have that bad feeling, but I don't know if it's
because
of her or not. Don't worry about it, okay? Let's dance."

>
As they moved out onto the dance floor, Mars tried to steer them
towards
>the green-clad red-head, but she kept slipping through the crowd
with a
dancer's grace. Mars finally gave up and hoped her feelings
would prove
>wrong.

>Nephrite smiled as he listened to his wife. She was very excited
about
having helped prepare the meals for this ball, and kept
looking over to
>the tables of food to see if people were enjoying it. For a moment,
he
had the strangest sensation something awful was going to
happen. He
>tried to ascertain what it was, but couldn't place it.

>"Nephrite, are you listening?" Jupiter looked concerned. "You had
that
faraway look on your face... Oh, I see, you sensed
something..."
>
Nephrite was very grateful for the Senshi's telepathic
abilities. He
>didn't mind that his wife read his thoughts. It saved a lot of

explaining.
>
Jupiter looked around the room and said, "I don't see anyone

suspicious.

>I'll tell the other Senshi to be on the lookout." She closed her eyes
eyes
briefly. "They said they will. Rei said she's been sensing something,

>and so has Jadeite. I think Hotaru would have, but I didn't get a hold
hold
of her."

>
"Thank you," he said. He smiled and changed the talk to happier matters.

>
"Sorry for stopping in the middle," Venus laughed to Zoisite,
"but Mako-

>chan just _had_ to tell me to look out for suspicious people. I don't
don't
know why! She said Nephrite sensed something... Actually, all the other

>guys have been sensing stuff."

>"It must not be too bad, I don't sense anything," Zoisite said, looking
around.

>
"What do you mean? Shouldn't you sense it, too?"

>
He lowered his head a bit and said, "Ever since I... died... I've been

>weaker than I used to be."

>"Oh..." She shifted uncomfortably. They always avoided talking about
Zoisite's death at the hands of Saturn and his resurrection thanks to

>the palace mages.

>"Well, um... want to... nevermind." He almost suggested dancing, but he
didn't feel up to it. He glanced over to Kunzite, dining with Mercury.

>He frowned darkly and turned back to Venus. "Minako, please excuse me."

>"Oh, um, okay." She watched him leave the room. She stood up and walked
over to Mercury and Kunzite. They smiled at her as she approached.

>
"Hello, Minako," Mercury said. "What brings you over here?"

>
"I accidentally reminded him of his death," she said sadly. "And then

>he got all mad and left. But... I don't know if it was about that. He
looked over here before he left."

>
"That's strange." Mercury frowned. "Why would we anger him?"

>
Kunzite sat thinking over things as they talked. He thought about all

>his options and finally decided. He stood and excused himself and also
left the room.

>
"What's going on?" Venus asked with a groan.

>

>
Zoisite leaned against a wall outside the ballroom, still frowning.

>Several people passed by him and cast him curious looks, but kept
going.

>
Saturn started walking in his direction. He paled a bit and forced

>a smile when she approached. She stopped when she saw it, looking
at him quizzically, then lowered her eyes to the floor.

>
"I... I'm sorry, Zoisite, I didn't mean to scan your thoughts. I've

>been having a bit of trouble with my telepathy since I woke up. I...
well, I just saw something I have no business knowing."

>
"What?" he said, paling.
>
"I won't risk anyone overhearing but... I hope things will somehow
>work out... and... You got upset earlier about... um... I'm still
very sorry about that, you know. I have a hard time accepting that I
>killed you once."

>"I'm not mad because it was you," he said. "It was just so awful... I
can't remember exactly how it felt, or what happened before I was brought
>back, but what I do remember is terrible."

>"I'm still sorry," she whispered.

>"I do forgive you," he said, holding out his hand to her. She smiled faintly and took it. He lightly squeezed her hand and released it. "Now,
>promise you won't tell anyone about... you know."

>"I promise!"

>"Thanks." Zoisite smiled as she entered the ballroom. Kunzite soon
emerged, so he quickly put on a nonchalant face.

>
"Zoisite, may I have a word with you?" he asked. "... Alone?"

>
"Um, sure," Zoisite nervously replied. Kunzite led Zoisite to his room
>down the hall and locked the door once they'd entered.

>"Zoisite... let me ask you a question. And be honest, I can tell when
you're lying. Are you satisfied with your relationship with Minako?"
>
"Well, um... no," Zoisite admitted. "I mean, she's a nice girl and all,
>but... I guess... I just don't feel anything for her. And when I think
about it... I always thought I loved her, but I realize now that I didn't.
>I mistook strong emotions for love when it was really just a deep friend-
ship."
>
"Easy mistake to make," Kunzite said softly.
>
"Speak from experience?"
>
"I never really loved Ami," he said, sighing. "I think I tried to convince
>myself I did... I stay with her because I don't want to hurt her by
breaking up with her."
>
"Yeah, same here," Zoisite laughed nervously. What was Kunzite getting at?
>"I... well... I'm guessing there's a reason for asking that."

>"You're right." Kunzite walked over to his bookcase and fiddled with a
snow globe a bit. "But I'll get to that..."
>
"Series of questions leading to the real thing, huh?"

>
"Very good," he said, setting the globe down. "What do you think of
>Haruka and Michiru?"

>"They're very nice--"

>"Together."

>"They're a lovely couple," he said. "I can see they really love each other.
They were made for each other."
>
"Doesn't bother you that they're both women?"
>
Zoisite gave another nervous laugh. "Not at all."
>
"Hmmm." Kunzite turned to face him again. "Zoisite, I've been

considering

>leaving Ami to pursue someone I am truly interested in. I've given it a
lot of thought and... well..." He trailed off and stopped talking.

>
"Go on, I'm listening," Zoisite said. He felt his heart pound a bit.

>
"Well, we've always been good friends, right?"

>
"Yeah..."

>
"And we spend a lot of time together."

>
"... Yeah..."

>
"Well..." Kunzite clenched and unclenched his fist. "This is harder than

>I thought..." He sighed and said, "I'll just be blunt then.

Zoisite...
I've been attracted to you for a long time now. And _not_ as a friend."

>
"Really?!" Zoisite came over to him and stared at him.

>
"I don't want this to ruin our frie--"

>
"Kunzite! No, no, I..." Zoisite smiled sheepishly. "Well, I was hoping I

>could leave Minako for you..."

>Kunzite was silent a moment, just staring, then he started laughing.

"Well, I guess this works out well then!"

>
"Yes, yes it does!" Zoisite said eagerly. "I... I don't know what I'll

>say to her... I don't think I could tell her this... But...

Wow!"

>"We'll figure out a way to break it to them." Kunzite chuckled a bit.
"But for now... we'll have to play their boyfriends, huh?"

>
"Damn," Zoisite muttered. "I don't want to go back in there now."

>
"Well, we don't have to go back just yet," Kunzite said. He found a

>music player somewhere and put on some music. Holding out his hand to
Zoisite, he winked. "Shall we dance?"

>
"Sure," Zoisite said, "but you'll have to be the 'guy' since you're

>taller."

>Kunzite laughed and grabbed his hands, twirling around the room with
him. When the song finished, he said, "You're a much better dancer than

>Ami."

>"Thank you. Minako complains about my dancing... guess it's hard to
dance when you aren't interested, huh?"

>
"I know how you feel." Kunzite slipped his arm around Zoisite's shoulders.

>"They're going to wonder where we went eventually."

>"Let them wonder," Zoisite said. He took Kunzite's chin in his hand and
gently kissed him. "The ball will go on for several hours. We won't be

>missed."

>"Fine with me..."

>

>"... And this document," Queen Serenity said, handing it to Sharra.
Sharra nodded and read it over carefully, then signed it.

>
"I think that's enough signing for today," Sharra said. "My hand is

>starting to ache from it all. I can't believe how your people require
commitments to be placed in writing."

>
"Sometimes people try to break commitments and need physical proof of
>the commitment they made," Serenity replied.

>"Your people are that dishonest?" Sharra asked in surprise.

>Serenity smiled sadly to her. "Some, yes, so we have to take this
precaution."
>
"I hope my people don't learn these things from yours. Things have
been difficult enough as it is."

>"What's been difficult?"

>"The Assassins' Guild," Sharra spat bitterly. "I don't know how such
a group can exist on my world. It's bad enough that money has started
to become common... but people that willingly kill others! People
pay or give gifts or owe favors to these... these creatures that commit
murder in return. People are so angry, so jealous of others that they
hire the Assassins to kill those they don't get along with. It's
disgusting. My own coronation ceremony was interrupted by someone trying
to kill me and the whole guild coming to make sure it went through. But
>... thank the creator, the Time Guardian appeared and attacked the woman
that was about to kill me, and then Akeru killed another that made an
>attempt. If the Guardian had not appeared--"

>"Do you mean Sailor Pluto?"

>"I do believe she called herself that, but... well, she is the Guardian
of Time. We all know of her. When we are growing up, we were told of a
woman that stood before the Gateway and watched the flow of things and
kept the Gateway functioning. I didn't think she was Human."

>
"What exactly is said about her?" Serenity asked. Pluto had been acting
strange lately. Maybe the Quenholian legends held some information that
could be useful in determining the cause of her behavior. They had a much
greater understanding of things involving magic than her people did.

>Sharra cleared her throat and closed her eyes for a moment, her brow
furrowed in concentration, then she began to recite from memory, "The
Guardian of Time looks over the Gateway that lies between all worlds,
times, and realities. She observes the flow and makes sure the Gateway
does not become damaged. Her task is eternal, but not so difficult that
it causes suffering. The Gateway was handed down to her by the All
Seeing when his people retreated from the physical plane. As he was fond
of our people, he allowed our world to be a separate place in time that
would not affect the others. The Gateway allows all things to be accessed
from one location and is necessary for existence to continue. Without the
Guardian, we would not be."

>"Are you sure this is true?"

>"It must be. It is the way of things, as told to us by the All Seeing."

>"What is the All Seeing?"
>"He was a man of many worlds and none. He was not Human or Elf or any
other race anyone knew of. He saw everything happening as it happened.

>I'm not certain how he came to exist. He was of a race of people that
had great power, but could not stay in the physical plane for fear of

>harming everything around them. When they were leaving, he realized
that the Gateway existed and was very, very important.

Someone who

>lived on the physical plane was needed to watch over it, so he appointed
the Guardian."

>
"Her duty is to watch over time and make sure nothing goes wrong, correct?"

>
"Wrong?" Sharra frowned and sat back in her chair. "There is no right or

>wrong where time is concerned. Things happen but there is no set path.
She just watches time as it happens, sees what is happening. She doesn't

>take any action, unless it involves the repair of the Gateway. If it
becomes damaged, all things would suffer."

>
"You are absolutely certain this is true."

>
"Yes!" Sharra laughed and gestured to Serenity with her pen.

"Why are you

>so worried?"

>"Pluto is one of my Senshi," Serenity said. "And my understanding of
her position... You make her task sound so simple, but there is much

>more involved."

>"Maybe she doesn't know what her task really is. Or... The All Seeing
was eccentric, and he might have been misleading in naming her task.

>Our information is correct."

>"I know we had planned to discuss the trade more, but... I need to
speak with Sets-- ah, Pluto."

>
"If you wish. I need to speak with some of my advisors, anyways."

>
Serenity rushed from the room, wondering where Pluto might be. She had

>returned yesterday, saying she wasn't needed at the Gate. Where would
she have gone? There was a ball going on, but Pluto didn't like balls.

>Serenity went to her room and knocked on the door. There was no answer.
She tried all the princesses' rooms, but no one answered. They were all

>at the ball. She didn't bother with the Generals; they would be with
their lovers at the ball. She considered asking Immora to use her magic

>to search for Pluto, but Immora had specifically told Serenity to make
sure no one disturbed her and Akeru. It had been forty years since they

>had been together, after all, and as a friend of hers, Serenity wouldn't
go against her wishes. She sighed and started walking through the halls

>with no real direction. She would have to tell Pluto later.

>She stopped when she neared the ballroom. She would have to make an
appearance eventually. She decided to get it over with.

>
People automatically moved to let her through when she entered.

She

>nodded to them and proceeded to her seat; designed after her throne, it
sat in the center of the wall opposite the entrance, where she could sit

>and watch everything happening. She didn't enjoy sitting there, but at
least she would be able to think about everything that was going on.

>
When she took a seat, several people swarmed around her. She asked them

>to return to their merriment. She sighed to herself and settled back.

>Being a queen was good in that she helped many people's lives be better
than they would be otherwise. She got to see amazing things no one else

>could see. She could make a difference. But there was so much attention,
so much responsibility, and the fact that she ruled over a whole system

>attracted threats from outside forces. It could be tiresome sometimes,
but she knew it was for the best. She had been hailed as the best queen

>the kingdom had ever had, and it pleased her to know she was doing so
much good for her people.

>
She smiled to herself when she saw her daughter. Though she was not

>dancing-- Endymion wasn't back yet-- she still enjoyed herself. Serenity
was so happy that they had finally gotten married. It had been difficult

>at first to arrange things; the tradition was to marry of your own planet,
not outsiders, but that was slowly changing. Her daughter's marriage had

>helped. Neptune had been the first planet to really support the marriages
between races, even forming engagements between its royalty and that of

>other planets. There were so many children in the royal family of Neptune
that every planet could be linked to them by marriage.

The Moon Kingdom,

>of course, was the exception.

>Queen Serenity couldn't help but smile to herself at the situation.
When the King of Neptune had proposed the idea of all their planets

>being linked in marriage through Neptune, it had been debated for
months and grudgingly agreed upon. When Serenity announced that her

>daughter was marrying of Earth and not Neptune, King Neptune was very
angry, saying it destroyed the very idea he'd proposed. Serenity assured

>him that things would be fine; one of Endymion's sisters was marrying
one of the king's sons, after all.

>
And then there was the situation with Uranus. The son had run off years

>ago, leaving only the princess to marry someone from Neptune. King Neptune
had decided which of his sons he wanted to marry Princess Uranus, then

>found out one of his daughters was her lover. Serenity had never seen
someone so furious. He said it destroyed the spirit of everything their

>system stood for, and was a disgrace to his family. It had taken Serenity's
power to overrule his decisions to keep Princess Neptune from being exiled.

>It angered her greatly that some people could not accept the

relationship
between two people of the same gender. She said Princesses Uranus and

>Neptune should marry if they chose, which would fulfill the King's idea
to unite all the planets in marriage with his. He wouldn't hear of it.

>
Serenity wondered what would happen when more people learned of Quenhol

>and started to travel back and forth from it. The Quenholtian people
seemed more accepting than their own. Perhaps some of their ideals would

>carry over. She wondered what King Neptune would think of Quenhol, if he
thought they should somehow bring Quenhol into his marriage idea. There

>was no royal family, after all. Sharra was the ruler, but her family was
still considered common. She didn't seem interested in marrying and

>admitted that she hadn't had a relationship since she was very young
(fifty, she'd said, which was young for an Elf). A human only a fraction

>of her age probably wouldn't be the one to gain her affections.

>Serenity considered the trade arrangements they had been making. Sharra
was firmly against a monetary system. She said people should have access

>to the things necessary for life-- shelter, nourishment, clothing--free
of charge. Payment or trade should only be made for indulgences like

>jewelry, perfumes, fine cloths, and bouquets. She was mad that people
were starting to charge for those necessary items and that others were

>accepting this and paying for it. That made their negotiations difficult.
Sharra insisted that trade should be items for items, no money involved.

>Serenity was sure her people wouldn't appreciate that and work around it,
setting their own conversion rates from Quenholtian money to Mercos,

>Tenshi crystal, or gil. It was the one thing they couldn't settle.

>She was surprised when she noticed Pluto dancing with someone near the
center of the room. She recognized him as a senator from Jupiter. She

>was amazed to see Pluto actually attending a social function, much less
dancing. She mentally called to Pluto, asking her to come over and speak

>with her. Pluto said she would when this song was over.

>It finally finished, and Pluto walked over to where Serenity was sitting.
"What do you want, my queen?"

>
"Have you heard the stories the Quenholtians tell about you?"

Serenity

>asked quietly.

>"Recently I did, yes. What are you getting at?"

>"Are they true?"

>"Absolutely," Pluto said with a grin. "Isn't it absurd? I spent this
much time thinking I had such a huge job when it was really a misinter-

>pretation of what I was told. That jerk played such twisted mind games
... thank goodness I won't see him again for awhile..."

>
"Sharra said the All Seeing was eccentric," Serenity murmured.

>
"Eccentric? Insane is the word. He was so... ah well, it makes me too

>mad to talk about. I must say the most satisfying moment in my life was
when I kicked him between--"

>
"Pluto," Serenity warned. Pluto laughed a bit.

>
"Well, my queen, if you don't mind, I'm going to go back and enjoy myself.

>It's been too long since I've had real fun," Pluto said. Serenity nodded
and dismissed her.

>
Pluto started looking around for another handsome man to dance with. She

>managed to catch the eye of a man that reminded her of someone she had
been interested in when she was much younger. She smiled grimly to

>herself, remembering how someone-- she didn't know who-- had actually
come to the Gate and somehow made her relive everything in a dream. They

>had used sorcery, which pretty much ruled out a human. For a little
while, she considered it. The Senshi had been allowed to relive their

>memories thanks to a spell by the Quenholian queen. Perhaps she had
come and cast the spell on Pluto.

>
Pluto asked the man to dance, and he quickly accepted. She smiled to

>herself as she danced with him. She had never really appreciated the
fact that she was far more beautiful than most women until now.

>
Pluto noted with mild interest that the Quenholian queen had entered

>the ballroom. She wore her usual fuschia and gold garments, but her
skirt fell to her ankles and wasn't slit on the sides as it usually was.

>Pluto grinned to herself. She had always loved designing clothing, and
had created a large amount of garments that she ended up leaving on

>Quenhol just to get them off her hands. The ruler at the time had
discovered them and wore them, and since then, the designs for all the

>royalty's clothing was modeled after them. Pluto wondered if they
realized the Guardian of Time they taught children about had designed

>the royal clothing.

>The queen walked over to where Pluto was dancing. When the song was
over, she asked Pluto to step aside and speak to her. Pluto shrugged

>and agreed.

>"Guardian... ah, Setsuna, I believe?"

>"That's right, Clorianostriana."

>With a laugh, she said, "Please, call me Sharra. It's such a mouthful
to say my real name."

>
"Why did you choose Sharra?"

>
"I thought it was appropriate. It means 'magic light.'

Clorianostriana

>is 'a song and dance that brings joy'. I don't sing or dance, but I am
taught in sorcery and magic."

>
"Why did you want to talk to me?" Pluto asked.

>
"I just wanted to confirm your suspicions. I did cast that spell on you.

>I hope you didn't mind. But... we all need to remember once in awhile."

>"That's alright." Pluto noted she seemed distressed. "Is something wrong?"
>"I feel... it's strange. I sense danger, that's not unusual. But it seems... focused at... I don't know. All I can tell is that it involves a
>relative of the person that is the threat."
>Pluto let her mind drift to scan through the timestream. She was angry
that she couldn't pinpoint the source, but she had to admit, she
>preferred having less power to believing she had so much responsibility.
"Sorry, Sharra, I couldn't tell what it was. The Senshi have been alerted
>that something might happen. Some of us have been sensing things, too."
>"Be careful," Sharra said, turning to walk away.
>
>E'melok finished the slice of bread and cheese she'd been eating. She wanted to keep her strength up and would probably need the energy
>carbohydrates provided. It wouldn't take long for them to kick in,
thanks to the Elven part of her blood. She looked around the room
>again, smiling to herself when she noticed a faint glint high up in
an opening in the ceiling, the tip of one of Dageena's wing claws.
>It was getting close to the right time. She looked around the room
once again with a grim smile. Good, the only people here that would
>recognize her were the one she was attacking and Pluto. She hoped
Either Dageena or Curse would quickly kill that witch.
Ka'ina should
>be in place to attack Akeru. E'melok wiped off her mouth and walked
in the direction of the queen of this strange realm. The pale beauty
>sat poised in her chair, calmly observing the ball. She had no idea
what was going to happen.
>
>The people attending this ball were diplomats and royalty. All soft
>from being protected by security forces all their lives, unable to stand a chance against her. Some mages were here, but they weren't
>a threat either. And the Senshi? If they were a threat, Dageena and Curse would hold them back.
>
>E'melok felt the familiar surge of adrenaline that came when she was
>about to attack. She was eager to get started. She had wanted to do this for a long time.
>
>
>Ka'ina didn't bother concealing her maniacal laughter as she walked
through the hallways towards Akeru and Immora's room. Everyone walking past her stared at her. She passed two men that seemed a bit
>familiar. They looked like some of the people E'melok had pointed out the other day to demonstrate her senses. They briskly walked past
>her, though a concerned look crossed their faces. Ka'ina just grinned
and kept walking.
>
>"Did you feel that, Kunzite?" Zoisite whispered.
>">
>"Yes, she is a threat," he returned. "I'm sure they can handle

it,
>though. Somehow, I don't think this is the one we've been
sensing."

>Ka'ina stopped in front of the door. Finally, she could kill the
bitch
that stole Immora from her. And interrupting their reunion
too, an
>added bonus. She clenched her fist and whispered a spell that
would
blast the door apart. She cackled as it shot at the door and
it
>splintered into tiny fragments. She automatically walked forward,
then
stopped in shock. Where there should be an opening to the
room, there
>was darkness. She cautiously reached her hand towards it, and
screamed
when it was burnt by a burst of flame. Gasping, she
backed away.
>
There was some sort of shield around the room! How could they?!"
She
>was coming for her revenge and they dared block her out! Her
own
magical abilities weren't strong enough to break a shield like
this.
>With a hiss, she started to run at the shield, and stopped short
when
a rough hand grabbed her shoulder.
>
"That's quite enough, miss," Kunzite hissed icily. "You're
coming
>with me."

>"WHAT?! How dare you! I am Ka'ina--" he started to drag her
towards
the prison, "--Hypnotist's Fire, long-time student of
Immora, and
>Akeru has stolen her from me! Let me go! I have to kill her!
She
is mine by right! Get your hands off me--"
>
"Feisty, isn't she?" Zoisite said with a grin as he followed
them.
>"Sounds like she has a bit of an obsession, hmmmm?"

>"It does, doesn't it?" Kunzite said, speaking loudly to cover
Ka'ina's
voice. "We better ask one of more powerful mages to come
and sedate her
>with a spell. Normal sedatives probably won't affect her."

>Zoisite nodded in agreement. Ka'ina started shouting now, trying
to
scratch Kunzite with her nails. "Not exactly the sanest person
I've
>ever met. I wonder what made her snap."

>"I think I recognize her," Kunzite said. "She's a student of
Immora's
and was around back when Immora was being trained. I'm
sure you've
>heard stories of what the teacher did, the spells he put on
people.
Anyways, she's around Immora's age."
>
"Mages age well," Zoisite said with a grin. "What keeps them
from
getting old?"

>"I'm not sure exactly. Something about their magic, I guess,
keeps
them going until they're killed."
>
Ka'ina started speaking a spell, and Kunzite quickly threw her
against
the wall. Her head hit against it, knocking her unconscious before
she
could cast the spell. A flash of light appeared and danced
around her,
>then went away, leaving her slightly singed.

>"See why we can't stop a spell in the middle?" Kunzite said,
throwing
Ka'ina over his shoulder.

>
"Yeah," Zoisite said, frowning a bit.
>
"What?"
>
"I don't like seeing a woman thrown over your shoulder," he grumbled.
>
Kunzite laughed and winked at him. "Don't worry, you're the only man for me."

>"That's good to hear."

>Kunzite clasped Zoisite's hand in the one that was free and walked
with him to imprison Ka'ina.
>

>
"She's almost ready," Dageena told Curse as they looked down from their hiding place in the ceiling. "Are you ready?"

>"Hold on," Curse said. She was examining the two staffs she had with
her. "What to use, what to use..."
>
"Save the blade, for now," Dageena said. "That staff is only good for cutting, and I'll be doing plenty of that."

>"Good thinking," Curse said. She held the blade-topped staff in her
hands, concentrated hard on it, and it slowly disappeared.
"How do
>you know when she's ready, anyways?"

>"Body language, mainly, and she has a bit of telepathy. It isn't
enough for holding a real conversation, but she can send out fleeting images of what she plans. She showed herself fighting, so I know she
will be ready. She gave you her dagger to hold onto, correct? Well,
>she will send you a signal when she is ready for you to send them to
her."
>
"Huh." Curse pulled out a thick string and tied her hair back with it.
>"Handy ability. Well, ready as I'll ever be. You sure you can fit through
the opening?"
>
"Who said I'd be using the opening as it is?" Dageena grinned wickedly.
>"Your abilities make you immune to fire, I hope."

>"Yes--"

>"Good," Dageena said, speaking in a tone that clearly said "this con-
versation is over." Curse grumbled and settled into a kneeling position.
>
"Why do I ever agree to these crazy things..." she muttered.

>

>
E'melok strode purposefully towards her target. She started filling with more energy than before, preparing for what would happen. With her
telekinesis, she gripped a section of her dress that would allow her to tear it off in one swift mental tug. Under the dress was halter top and
pants made of her usual dark green leather. She found it much easier to move in than her double-bodysuit and coat. Her target was talking to some
people that were probably advisors of some sort. She smiled to herself.
>Always unsuspecting... she was just like her brother. E'melok sneered
inwardly at that; she held her father in great contempt. He had abandoned his wife and daughter when E'melok was still young, and his sister

had
done nothing to help bring him back.
>
She carefully flexed the muscles in her back, feeling them grow more taut. She stood still and shifted her weight some, tensing her legs.

The target's back was turned to her. E'melok sent another flicker of thought to Dageena and then to Curse. She was pleased to feel the familiar weight of her dagger in her hand. Several people started to turn around when they saw the dagger, and with a mental pull, her dress
ripped off, freeing her movements. She leapt into the air and flipped, landing near her target.

>At that moment, a horrible, piercing shriek came from the ceiling.
People started to panic, covering their eyes to block out the sound.
>A section of the ceiling burst into flame, and two women fell through
the flames; Dageena and Curse.
>
E'melok smiled, positioning her dagger at her target. "Hello, my aunt,
>Sharra. It's been awhile."

>"Aunt?" Sharra slowly backed away. "I don't know what you... Oh. Oh no...
you're..."
>
"The little girl that grew up in the Assassin's Guild thanks to your brother abandoning my mother. That would be me."

>"But... you're Human! My brother was a Forest Elf, and his wife was Human,
I know you were mixed--"
>
E'melok laughed loudly. "My mother was NOT Human! She looked it, but she
>was Dragana!"

>E'melok could smell and hear someone behind her, and pivoted on one leg,
smoothly executing a kick with the other. She noted that the man she'd kicked was the blonde general she'd observed the other day standing by the
cloaked one. An angry Sailor Mars was behind him, trying to help him back
>to his feet.

>Dageena soared over the crowd, breathing fire over them, the pumping of
her wings sending out strong gusts that knocked some people over. She
>held Curse by her wrists, who gripped hers in return. Dageena flew right
behind Sharra, releasing her grip as Curse pointed her legs at the back
>of Sharra's head. Sharra let out a cry as Curse slammed into her back,
knocking Sharra to the ground. Her staff was soon held high and slammed
>across the back of Sharra's head, knocking her unconscious. Curse stood
and poised herself to prepare for any attackers, expertly twirling her
>staff and delivering strong blows at people that tried to get near her.
Dageena continued her aerial assault.
>
"I don't know why you just tried to kill Sharra," Mars spat,
>"but you're
>not going to live to tell about it! MARS FLAME SNIPER!"

>E'melok dove and rolled away from the flaming arrow. She was mildly
impressed by the Senshi's abilities. She almost moved too slow to avoid
>the arrow. Her momentum pushed her back onto her feet. She smiled at

bit
and said, "I think I may have to change if I'm going to deal with you! A
>challenge, at last!"
>E'melok attached her dagger to a small fabric strip on her waistband. She
felt all her muscles tighten as she stood still, her mixed blood burning
>inside her. She focused on a specific pitch in it and concentrated on
strengthening it.
>
Mars could not believe her eyes. She watched as the seemingly human woman
>in front of her gained Elven tips on her ears, her skin turning a pale
green. Her nails grew into sharp claws, and her teeth became sharper as
>well. Her features seemed more delicate in places, and something about
her suggested she was more agile. Mars had no idea how she'd just done
>what she'd done, but was convinced she didn't want this woman to live for
her to find out.
>
E'melok let out a small, satisfied hum when her change finished. Dageena
>had been right; it wasn't Ka'ina's spell that gave her the appearance of
a Human. Her own abilities allowed her to change the strength of her genes
>and make one set-- Human, Elf, or Dragon-- show more than the others. Now
she let herself be the best of Human and Elf with the senses of a Dragon.
>
E'melok snarled as Mars fired another flaming arrow at her. E'melok leapt
>into the air again and landed behind Mars. She spun her body to face Mars
as she delivered a kick. Mars lost her balance and almost fell. E'melok's
>kicking foot hit the ground and she brought her other leg up at once to
slam her foot into Mars' chin, knocking her back onto the floor.
>
"ENOUGH!" a voice shouted from behind E'melok. E'melok turned to see
>nine women standing there in Sailor uniforms. A girl with white hair
stood in the center, seeming to be the leader. "This violence has to
>stop now. Innocent people are enjoying this ball and you've spoiled it.
I am the sai--"
>
"Stop the speech already!" E'melok shouted. She surprised Silver Moon by
>rushing at her, arms held ready to deliver blows. Uranus stepped in front
and grunted when E'melok's fist connected with her stomach. E'melok was
>startled that she took the punch so well and hesitated to react. Uranus
swung at her, and she narrowly missed the blow, diving between the tall
>blonde's legs and rolling onto her back when she was behind her. Pushing
back onto her shoulder blades, she forced her legs out to hit Uranus in
>the back, letting the motion carry her back to her feet.

>Uranus fell forward but quickly recovered, delivering her own solid kick
into E'melok's stomach. E'melok let out a shout of pain and drew her
>dagger. Her eyes widened when she saw the wicked sword Uranus pulled out.
With a grin equally wicked, Uranus said, "Well, want to try your dagger

>against this?"
>E'melok dropped to the floor and swept her legs under Uranus's, dropping
her to the floor as well. E'melok stood and ran from the Senshi. She had >no doubt that in a purely physical battle, she could defeat any of the
Senshi with no problem. When they brought in their magical weapons, things >got ugly. She wasn't so arrogant that she tried to fight against impossible
odds. When she was younger, she would have, but she knew better now. >Turning around to look back when she was at a safe distance, she saw the
Senshi coming at Curse, who had erected a force field. Curse was in a >fighting stance, ready to battle if the force field fell. E'melok looked
to see that Dageena had sent all the ballgoers fleeing, those that could >move after her onslaught. Plenty of burnt corpses lay on the ground.
E'melok saw Queen Serenity was trapped on her chair by a thick layer of >ice, which was probably causing damage from its temperature. A mental
signal told Dageena to come help deal with the Senshi. Dageena's flight >path quickly changed and she launched at the Senshi.
>"Look out!" Saturn shouted, pointed at the Dragana rushing right at them.
The Senshi quickly ducked, just in time to keep from being knocked over. >As it was, the rush of air almost did that. Dageena pushed herself up
so she was in a vertical position and stopped moving her wings, dropping >to her feet on the floor.
>E'melok gave herself a telekinetic boost to speed her back at the Senshi.
The three of them against ten Senshi. This could be interesting. She >could deal with these odds.
>Mercury had stepped back to take out her visor and computer, quickly
scanning the three foes they faced. None were entirely one species, and >that troubled her. The dark-skinned redhead appeared human at first
glance, but when Mercury scanned more, she detected some traces of >something her computer couldn't determine. The winged woman was a bit
human, but mostly something Mercury couldn't believe. She didn't know >what people had designed her computer, but the woman registered as
being almost entirely Dragon. The acrobatic green woman was half Forest >Elf with some human and Dragon mixed in. Mercury scanned a bit more and
realized they all had some sort of powers... all had fire, and the two >Dragonish women also had ice and lightning abilities. She put away
her computer and visor. >
"Jupiter, only attack the woman guarding Sharra!" she shouted. "The >other two use lightning! Mars, they all use fire, don't try that on
them!" >
"Gotcha!" Jupiter shouted. >
Dageena sneered a bit at them and inhaled deeply. "So, you think you're >so smart?"
>Flames poured out of her mouth at Mercury, who barely dodged.

Dageena >folded in her wings as tightly as she could so she could maneuver on
>foot. She dove at Mercury, elbow spike extended. Mercury moved to the
>side, but the spike sliced across her right arm. She cried out and
>automatically shouted an attack, "Ice Wave Freeze!"

>The wave of ice slammed into Dageena, but she just shrugged it off and
>moved to attack again. She stopped when a large staff appeared in her
>way to block her path. She hissed at her red eyes met the equally red
>ones of Pluto.
>
"I don't think you'll be doing that, hmmmm?" Pluto said with a grim smile.
>She quickly slammed her staff across Dageena's skull, sending her reeling
>backwards. The weight of her wings made her lose her balance and fall to
>the floor, struggling to get up. She was stopped by a blade point aimed
>at her chest.
>
"I wouldn't move," Saturn said softly, nudging her glaive closer to the
>Dragana. "I don't want to kill you."

>Saturn cried out in surprise when her glaive was knocked aside by Curse,
>who had left the unconscious Sharra on the floor. Saturn barely kept her
>grip as she blocked another incoming blow of Curse's battle staff. Curse
>was relentless, continually pounding staff against glaive, anger lighting
>up her eyes. Saturn was grateful for whatever metal her glaive was made
>of; any other staff would have been damaged by now. She was hesitant to
>move away and open up a chance for Curse to attack.

>Curse paused a moment, and her staff disappeared, replaced by one similar,
>but topped with a sharp blade. Though smaller than the Silence Glaive, it
>would be formidable against her opponents. She thrust the blade at Saturn,
>who neatly side-stepped and brought her glaive up to hold back Curse's.
>She struggled for footing; she wasn't nearly as strong physically. Curse
>pulled back, twirling her staff, and attempted another thrust, which was
>blocked.

>Pluto was very effective in keeping Dageena on the floor. The Dragana
>seemed some-what uncertain of how to deal with the legendary Guardian
>of Time. Neptune had joined Pluto, keeping an eye out for Saturn as she
>battled Curse.
>
Saturn let out a small shout when Curse managed to knock back her
>glaive.
>Curse quickly moved to strike her, then screamed as Venus's love-me chain
>pinned her arms to her sides. It wasn't the fact that she was now trapped,
>but the love energy coursing through her from the chain was too much for
>a demon to bear. Noting this, Uranus unleashed her Heaven Fury. Curse
>fell to her knees, trying to pull free of the chain. Neo-Moon moved
>forward as well, releasing her Moonlight Laser.
>
E'melok looked on with disgust. Surely these Senshi weren't
>that
>formidable! She noted Mercury still nursing her arm, Pluto and

Neptune
guarding Dageena, with Jupiter moving to join them, and Uranus, Saturn,
>and Neo-Moon teamed up against Curse. Mars was still groggy from the

kick E'melok delivered earlier, and Silver Moon was remaining at her

>side. The Generals were trying to use their spells to free Queen Serenity
from her icy imprisonment. E'melok smirked a bit as her eyes locked on

>Silver Moon. She looked weak, and would probably be a poor fighter.

E'melok had observed earlier how awkward her movements seemed.

>
A few leaps put her by Silver Moon, and she quickly twisted her body to

>kick the princess in the ribs. She was surprised when Mars threw herself
between them, taking the kick instead. Mars cried out and slumped to the

>ground. Silver Moon was too shocked to react, and E'melok kicked her in
the side. The Senshi cried out and shouted for the others to help her.

>E'melok smirked and furiously attacked her, trying to render her unconscious before the others could aid her. Silver Moon wasn't good at

>blocking or returning blows, and just cried out in pain.

>E'melok was thrown forward by a blast from behind her. Jupiter stood
there, a deep scowl on her face. She hadn't hit E'melok, but the floor

>instead. E'melok was surprised at her ingenuity. She couldn't block out
the lightning unless it hit her directly. Her fist flew at Jupiter, and

>she screamed when Jupiter caught it and nearly crushed it in her grip.

>"I'm not too impressed with you," Jupiter said, bringing her knee up
sharply into E'melok's stomach. E'melok doubled over and quickly backed

>up, drawing her dagger in the process. She ignored her pain and leapt
at Jupiter, arms raised high with the dagger pointed at the Senshi.

>Jupiter barely moved away, catching the blade in her shoulder. She

screamed and threw a punch with her other arm, knocking E'melok to the

>floor, stunned to the point where she couldn't move.

>"I can't fight like this," Jupiter groaned to the other Senshi.

Mercury
nodded her agreement, coming over to help Jupiter. "But I can't just

>turn and leave."

>"We're wounded and useless for now," Mercury said. "But I agree, we

should stay. We don't know what tricks these women might have in store

>for us. The one that attacked you is the head of the Assassin's Guild,

according to Pluto, and she's out to kill Sharra and anyone who stands

>in her way."

>"Well, I'm not staying cuz of these freaks," Jupiter said with a grin.

"I'm just not one to run from a fight." She winced a bit and gripped

>her shoulder tighter. "Now, we need to take care of this... And we

need to help Silver Moon. She's hurt badly."

>
Mercury walked over and cradled Silver Moon in her arms.

"Neo-Moon!"

>she shouted. "Come here! We need you to heal her!"
>Neo-Moon rushed over and carefully healed her mother. Silver Moon
groaned, then smiled at Neo-Moon with gratitude.
>
"What about us?" Jupiter teased.
>
"Give me a moment," Neo-Moon said, panting a bit. "It wears me
out a
>bit. I can see why Saturn rarely uses her healing abilities."

>After a few moments, she healed Jupiter, rested, then healed
Mercury.
They stood up shakily.
>
"I warn you," Neo-Moon said, "it will probably make you feel
unsteady
>on your feet for awhile. We better stay here with my mother and
make
sure you all recover before we try to get back into the
fight."
>
Jupiter groaned a bit and finally nodded.
>
"Hurry up!" Jadeite shouted at Nephrite. "She's going to die of
the
>cold! Get moving or move aside and let me do it!"

>"Shut up!" Nephrite shouted at him. "You can't get your fire hot
enough
to free her quickly!"
>
"Both of you stop it!" Kunzite said, scowling at them. "Arguing
won't
>help. Nephrite, please try to hurry. Jadeite, you could help by
making
your own fire, alright?"
>
Jadeite snorted but nodded his agreement and started to cast his
own
>fire spell. Kunzite stood back, thinking through all the
possibilities.
The fire would melt the ice, he was sure, but he
worried that the queen
>would burn. He didn't know any spells that could help. Zoisite was

trying to comfort the queen and keep her from thinking of the
pain,
>and she weakly smiled at him. Kunzite smiled at the sight. Zoisite
was
a pain sometimes, but he had a much nicer side to him.

>
Jadeite and Nephrite both started swearing in frustration. "It's
no
>good!" Jadeite said. "I don't know why, but our fire didn't do a

thing to it!"
>
"It must be some sort of magic," Kunzite said. "We'll have to
think of
>something else."

>"She doesn't have time for us to think of something," Zoisite
said.
"We don't know how to deal with magic."
>
"Don't tell me we're going to ask Immora to help," Jadeite
groaned.
>
"I'm afraid that's the only viable option," Nephrite told him.
"She
>can free the queen. And they are old friends, after all, so
she'll
definitely agree to it."
>
"I'll go get her," Kunzite said, rushing off into the hallway.

>
Dageena noted the white-haired general leaving, then focused her
eyes
>on Pluto again. Pluto had the same grim expression on her face.
Dageena
smiled a bit, which seemed to irritate Pluto. After all,
what reason
>did she have to smile? Dageena wasn't sure what Pluto thought of
it.
She didn't waste time on it. She pulled her knees to her chest

and then

>drove her clawed feet into Pluto's stomach. Pluto didn't make a sound,
she merely backed away, arms folded around her abdomen. Neptune almost

>immediately shouted "Aqua Possessor!"

>Dageena felt like her body was being thrown into the sea, left to dissolve
into the waters. She grimaced at the sensation, but the attack had no

>real effect on her, having been blocked by her magic. She almost struck
Neptune with one of her elbow spikes.

>
Dageena let out a horrible howl of pain as the Space Sword sliced it off.

>
Uranus stood with her bloodied sword as Dageena clutched her elbow, her

>howls piercing everyone's ears. She shivered and looked at Uranus
murderously, shooting a bolt of lightning at her. Neptune dove and

>knocked Uranus to the floor. Dageena flew up near the ceiling to avoid
the Senshi. She had never had this happen to her before. She wasn't

>sure what to do. Though healing was quicker for her-- it was already
starting to scab-- it would take a long time for the spike to grow back.

>Despite the scabbing, the pain was unbearable. She flew up into the
area of the ceiling where she and Curse had waited, staying to recover.

>She wondered if one Quenholtian queen was really worth all this trouble.

>

>Kunzite lightly knocked on the door to Immora and Akeru's room. It
had been reattached and looked like nothing had ever happened to it.

>He assumed that was Akeru's doing. There was no answer. He tapped his
foot impatiently, then knocked again. He sighed as he waited. He

>finally gave up on knocking and shouted, "Immora, Queen Serenity is
dying! She needs your help!"

>
A few seconds later, Immora's head popped out the door. "That better

>not have been a joke," she growled. "You interrupted us."

>"I know, and believe me, I'm very sorry, but she really needs you.
There's an ice spell put on her by a Dragana and--"

>
Immora paled a bit. "There's a Dragana here?!"

>
"I thought you would sense it," he said in surprise.

>
"Well, the shield kept everyone out, and it also kept me from sensing

>anything outside of it," she said, ducking back behind the door.

>After
a moment, she stepped out in her black robes. "Well, let's be off,"

>she said, teleporting them into the ballroom.

>She seemed quite shocked at the destruction in the room, and actually
turned a faint green at the sight of the burned bodies. She looked away

>and quickly rushed over to Queen Serenity.

>"Thank... goodness..." Serenity murmured. She smiled faintly at Immora.
Immora quickly held out her hands and the ice started to disappear.

>Serenity was soon freed, and she limply fell back into Zoisite's

arms.
He carefully held her and carried her down from her chair.

>
"I'm getting her out of here," he said. "We should all go. She needs
>a doctor to make sure she's alright, and we better stay to protect
her."

>The other generals agreed and started to leave. Immora stopped
Kunzite.

>"Is she still here?" she whispered.

>"I saw her go into that hole in the ceiling," he said. Immora
nodded
and noted E'melok and Curse.

>
"Well, well, well..." she murmured. "E'melok tried to kill me
once. And

>Curse..." Immora shuddered. "You could say she was my tour guide in
Hell."

>"Excuse me?"

>"I'm serious," she said. "Do you think they need my help? I can't do

anything against Dageena. At least Uranus and Jupiter are
incredible

>fighters, but I just have my magic... which, unfortunately, Dragana
are
immune to."

>
"I think we can leave," he said. "The Senshi have it covered.
Besides,

>they need a challenge. The Dark Kingdom has more than three people
to
throw against us..." He trailed off, remembering how Beryl had
corrupted

>him and his fellow Generals. "She turned us into her 'Shitenno'
and
forced us to battle our, ah... lovers... and--"

>
Immora smiled mysteriously at him and said softly, "I didn't
know you

>had to attack Zoisite. And don't try to interrupt. It's clear as day
in
your thoughts. I didn't intend to see it, but the image was so
strong--"

>
"Saturn sensed it, too," he said. "That seems odd."

>
Immora shrugged and started to leave with him. "When love is
strong

>enough... And speaking of that, I better get back. You'd better
avoid
Akeru for awhile. She's pretty furious at you right now."

>
"I thought as much." Kunzite grinned.

>

>
E'melok snarled at the Outer Senshi, standing over her hunched
form.

>They had looked around and found some rope and had tied her as
much
as they could. They weren't sure what kind of escape artist
she was.

>E'melok fumed and tried to budge her bounds, but they didn't give
at
all. Her dagger had been taken away. She closed her eyes a bit.
She

>hated letting her Dragon blood take over too much, but she could
use
some claws right now... She cried out in frustration as they
barely

>frayed the ropes.

>"Awww, is the poor assassin trapped?" Uranus said mockingly.

>E'melok fumed and tried again, but nothing happened. She
couldn't
believe anyone had managed to trap her. She looked up at
the hole where

>Dageena had fled. Damnit, it was just an elbow spike! Why hadn't she

come to help her?! Curse was lying on the ground, her Demonic nature
>unable to cope with the energy that had been poured into her.

>The Outer Senshi turned away to help pick up Sharra and Silver Moon and
call for medical attention. Silver Moon wasn't entirely healed yet. Venus
>still stood by Curse, who was very slowly waking up. There was still no
sign of Dageena.
>
E'melok's head was throbbing with the Dragon blood. It was hard to ignore
it. She had only let it take control on one occasion, and that was very
brief. It felt like it would take over her, regardless of her wishes.
>She knew she wouldn't become a full Dragon, she'd turn into something
like Dageena. She didn't want that to happen.
>
She saw Dageena peer from the ceiling and tap her temple.
E'melok
>shuddered as she stretched out with her mind to Dageena. Dageena wanted
to escape, fly down and grab Curse when she was awake enough to teleport
>them. She ordered E'melok to tell Curse, then refused to share anymore
thoughts. E'melok moaned as she contacted Curse, who was still groggy,
>but agreed to try once she had woken up more.

>E'melok lay there, very angry at her situation. They were ready to leave,
but she was trapped! They wouldn't have time to get her before the Senshi
>did something! They would leave her behind! She scowled and shifted the
best she could.
>
She gave in to her Dragon blood.
>
The Outer Senshi whirled around at the sound of E'melok's loud shriek.
>Wings had burst from her back, tearing apart the ropes in the strength
of their emergence. E'melok unsteadily took to the air, and Dageena
>soon soared down from the ceiling to join her. Curse stood shakily, but
quickly teleported the three of them away.
>
"Thank goodness that's over," Silver Moon whispered. Uranus, who was
carrying her, nodded in agreement.

>"They were pretty tough," she said. "I hope we never see them again."

>Venus was kneeling by Sharra, who slowly woke up. She helped the queen
sit up and steadied her with an arm.
>
"Are... they..." Sharra coughed a bit. "They're gone?"

>
"Yes, they just left. You're going to be fine."
>
"She's... my niece..." Sharra whispered, sinking back against Venus.
>"E'melok..."

>Venus was horrified, but disguised it with a tiny smile. "Well, you
don't have to worry about her anymore. She left, and once we get you
>to a healer, you'll be good as new."

>The Senshi carefully took the two royal women away from the room.
Pluto slipped away from them when they were in the hallway, returning
>to the Gate.

>

>"Well, All Seeing, I see you've taken care of the fog," she said in a
light tone. She walked up to the Gate and carefully examined it.
"Good,
>there's nothing wrong. I'll be leaving now."

>"Setsuna," he growled. "You are not like other Humans. You're worse.

You've gone off on this whole 'I don't have responsibility
anymore'
>thing. You still have a duty."

>"And I am performing it," she said lightly. "When I wasn't fighting,
I
kept an eye out on the time stream. And I just made sure the
Gate was
>fine. Job done, time to go back and have fun."

>He sighed in exasperation. "Fine, fine... Go ahead. I can't
argue
with you."
>
"I'm so glad," she said sarcastically, teleporting back to the
Moon
>Kingdom.

>

>"no... 'm a mage... lemme go... mine, not hers..."

>"She's starting to talk," one of the doctors said to the other.
"What
do we do?"
>
"Find a mage to knock her out again," he returned, leading the
other
>from the room.

>"i'm... i'm..." There was a short groan, followed by her eyes
opening.
Ka'ina rubbed her temples as she carefully sat up.
"Uhhnnnn... hurts..."
>She looked around the room. "What... where am I..."

>"That's a good question," a voice said in her mind.

>Ka'ina narrowed her eyes, trying to focus. "Who... Familiar..."

>"Oh, it would spoil it if I told you, Ka'ina. You've changed.
You're
insane."
>
"Uh? Where are you?"
>
"I'm contacting you telepathically, you fool."
>
"You sound... like... teacher..." Ka'ina started to wake up
more. "But
>... he's dead..."

>"Bah! Yes, that's good. Now, get up and get yourself out of there.
I
want you to help me, hmmmm? I need a little bit of a
resurrection."
>
Ka'ina passed out again on her bed.
>
"Damnit! Damnit to He-- ... No, I'm already here, why should I
bother.
>I need someone with magic!" The invisible form searched through
the
palace, stopping where the Generals guarded Queen Serenity.

>
"There we go... they have enough power to summon me, but aren't
trained
>enough to realize that they're doing it. I just need a way to slip
the
spell to them and get them to cast it..."
>
The form slowly started to leave the world.
>
"... and I can finally have revenge against Immora for killing
me."
>

>TO BE CONTINUED, SOME DAY... <div>

End
file.